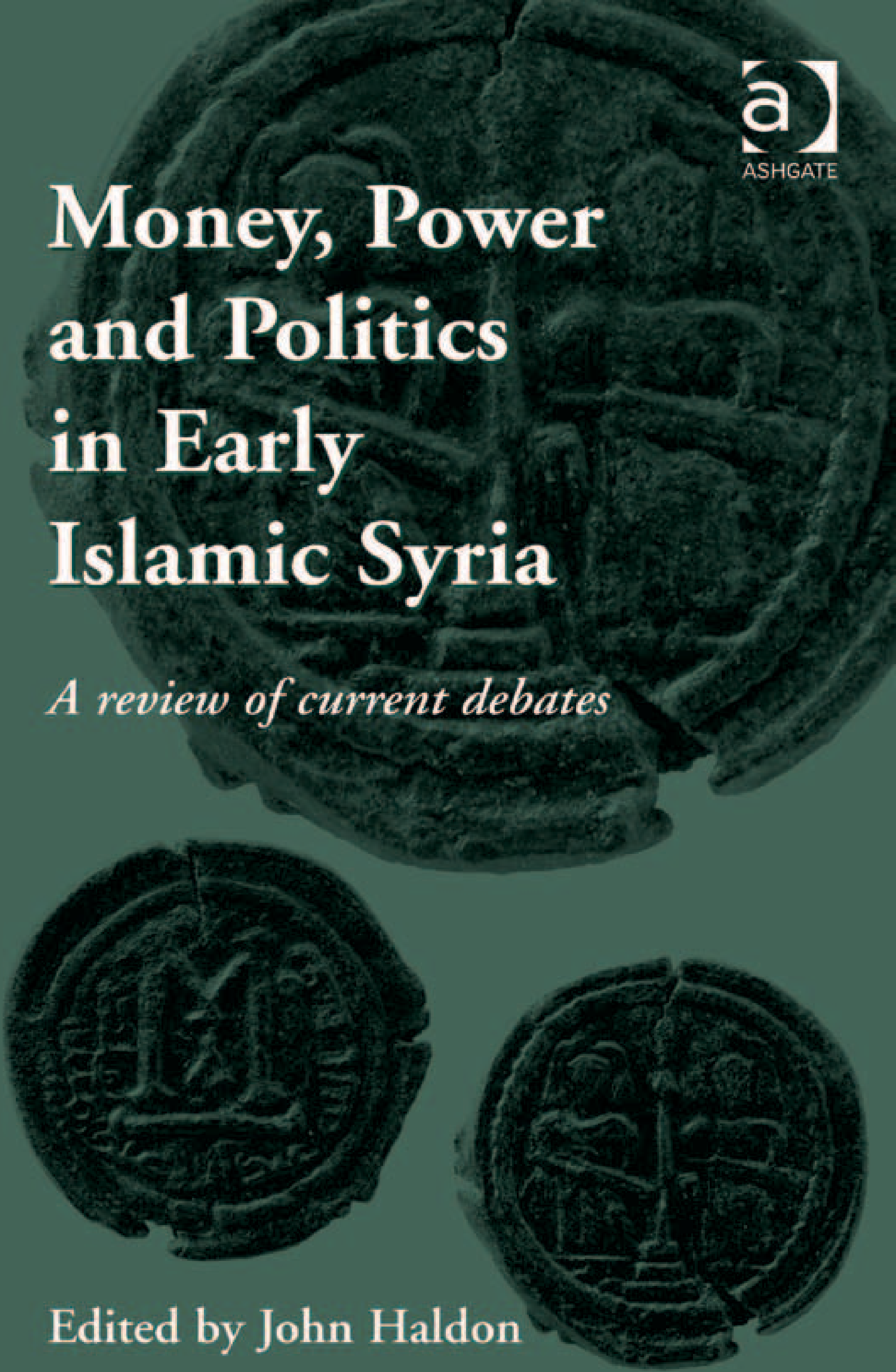
Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria

A review of current debates



Edited by John Haldon

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MONEY, POWER AND POLITICS IN EARLY ISLAMIC SYRIA

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Edited by

JOHN HALDON
Princeton University, USA

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List of Abbreviations

ANSMN	The American Numismatic Society Museum Notes
BASP	Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BF	Byzantinische Forschungen
BMGS	Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BZ	Byzantinische Zeitschrift
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
DOP	Dumbarton Oaks papers
EI	Encyclopaedia of Islam
EQ	Encyclopaedia of the Quran
IEJ	Israel Exploration Journal
IJMES	International Journal of Middle East Studies
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JESHO	Journal of the economic and social history of the orient
JNES	Journal of Near eastern Studies
JÖB	Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik
JRA	Journal of Roman Archaeology
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
JSAI	Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam
NC	Numismatic Chronicle
RBN	Revue Belge de Numismatique
RN	Revue numismatique
ZPE	Zeitschfrift für Papyrologie und Epigrafik

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List of Contributors

Jairus Banaji is a Professorial Research Associate in the Department of Development Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and was a Member of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, during 2006/2007 when his paper for this volume was written. He studied Classics at Oxford and Modern History at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His current research interests include a monograph on the Sasanian aristocracy, and recent publications include 'Islam, the Mediterranean and the Rise of Capitalism', *Historical Materialism* 15/1 (2007) and *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (2010).

Clive Foss teaches late Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic history at Georgetown University (Washington DC). His research focuses on the seventh and eighth centuries in the Near East. He is author of *Ephesus after Antiquity, Nicaea, Byzantine Fortifications, Arab-Byzantine Coins* and numerous other books and articles.

John Haldon is Professor of History at Princeton University. He studied in the UK, Greece and Germany, and is a Senior Fellow at the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies in Washington D.C. His research and publications focus on the history of the early and middle Byzantine empire, in particular in the period from the seventh to the eleventh centuries; on state systems and structures across the European and Islamic worlds from late ancient to early modern times; and on the production, distribution and consumption of resources in the late ancient and medieval world, especially in the context of warfare.

Gene W. Heck was a senior business development economist operating in the Middle East, working as an economic consultant to governmental and private sector organisations. He authored numerous books and articles on aspects of Middle East economics, and held a position as Adjunct Professor in Government and History at the University of Maryland. His research focused on the history of mining in the Arabian peninsula and on the economic development of the region. Sadly, he died suddenly during the final stages of production of this volume.

R. Stephen Humphreys is Professor of History and King Abdul Aziz Al Saud Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on the history, art and architecture of the medieval Islamic world, about which he has published widely. He is the author of *From Saladin to the Mongols: the Ayyubids of Damascus* (1977), *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (1991), and *Mu ʿawiya ibn Abi Sufyan: From Arabia to Empire* (2006), among other works.

Lutz Ilisch is attached to the Forschungsstelle für Islamische Numismatik of the Orientalisches Seminar at the University of Tübingen. A numismatic historian, he has published widely on early medieval and Islamic coinages

Hugh Kennedy is Professor of Arabic at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. He is a leading scholar of the history of medieval Islam, particularly in the Middle East, and has published extensively on Islamic politics, society, economy, urbanism and Christian-Muslim relations.

Jodi Magness is the Kenan Distinguished Professor for Teaching Excellence in Early Judaism, in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has researched and has published extensively in the field of the archaeology of the Holy land and early Islamic periods, including many books, most notably *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2002) and *The Archaeology of the Early Islamic Settlement in Palestine* (Winona Lake, IN, 2003).

Arietta Papaconstantinou is currently Marie Curie Fellow at the Oriental Institute, Oxford University. She is the author of *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides* (CNRS, 2001) and of various articles on aspects of late antique and early Islamic social history and material culture. Her research focuses on the history of Near Eastern Christian communities during the transition from Roman to Muslim rule.

Alan Walmsley is Professor of Islamic archaeology and art in the Carsten Niebuhr section of the Department of Cross Cultural and Regional Studies, University of Copenhagen. He has worked extensively as an archaeologist in the Middle East, most recently at the renowned site of Jarash in Jordan, where his work has significantly altered understanding of the social and economic transformations that accompanied the arrival of Islam. His most recent of many publications is *Early Islamic Syria: an archaeological assessment* (London 2007).

Preface

The social, political and cultural transformation of the eastern provinces of the Roman empire from the middle of the seventh century CE under the impact of Islam was one of the most significant events of the early Middle Ages, indeed has often been seen as marking a fundamental break with the previous cultural and political world, a break which saw out the world of late Antiquity and ushered in a very different medieval society. More archaeological material, better understanding of the archaeology as well as of the written sources, even though in the context of an increasingly complex relationship between textual, numismatic and archaeological evidence, new and sometimes more difficult questions, all have contributed to a constant process of revision and rethinking in ways that radically affect what we know or understand about the area, about state-building and the economy and society of the early Islamic world, and about issues such as urbanisation, town-country relations, the ways in which a different religious culture impacted on the built environment, and about politics. The changes which took place in the greater Syrian area during the seventh and early eighth centuries are crucial to understanding the evolution of one of the core regions of the Islamic world through into the later medieval and indeed the modern Middle East. In many cases, however, the evidence itself is contested, unclear, ambiguous, most obviously with the partial and biased literary evidence, especially that from histories and chronicles, but also with archaeological and material cultural evidence. The chronology ascribed to a particular class of ceramics has immediate implications for associated material and for particular sites, as well as for the wider east Mediterranean world and for our understanding of the processes and chronology of change across the early post-Roman period and beyond. This volume represents the fruits of a workshop held at Princeton University in May 2007 to discuss the ways in which recent work has affected our understanding of the nature of economic and exchange activity in particular, and the broader implications of these advances for the history of the region.

There were nine presentations, and all except one of those who presented a paper were able to submit their contribution for publication. To complete the coverage we invited Hugh Kennedy to write a paper dealing with an aspect of continuity and discontinuity in seventh-century Syria, and he has done so with an excellent contribution on the fate of the late Roman and early Islamic élite in greater Syria. The papers were intended to encourage discussion and debate across several disciplinary boundaries and in particular to draw the work of historians, archaeologists and numismatists together. As well as the speakers, a number of colleagues were present who acted as respondents to the presentations: Chase Robinson, Patricia Crone, Don Whitcomb, Fred Donner, Alan Stahl, Michael Morony, Guy Stroumsa, and Michael Cook all deserve thanks for their invaluable contributions to the discussion, as do the larger group of colleagues and graduate students from Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania and Rutgers

University who were present. We very much hope that the present volume will work in the same way as the workshop itself, to encourage debate, to broaden the discussion, and to raise new questions in a field of interest which is crucially important in the study of the emergence of the medieval Middle East.

John Haldon
Princeton 2009

Acknowledgments

The contributors are grateful to the History Department of Princeton University, the Center for Collaborative History, and the Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies for generously supporting the workshop which led to this volume.

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Introduction
Greater Syria in the Seventh Century: Context and Background

John Haldon

The social, political and cultural transformation of the eastern provinces of the Roman empire from the middle of the 7th-century CE under the impact of Islam was one of the most significant events of the early Middle Ages, indeed has often been seen as marking a fundamental break with the previous cultural and political world, a break which saw out the world of late Antiquity and ushered in a very different medieval society. Until the Arab-Islamic conquests, the late Roman state drew the bulk of its income from Egypt and from the rich provinces of Greater Syria, Mesopotamia (northern Iraq) and Cilicia (the modern Turkish province of Adana), all lost to the Arabs after the 640s and only partially, in their northern perimeter, recovered in the 10th century. With the loss of these eastern provinces the income of the state collapsed to a fraction of the 6th-century total. As more archaeological material has become available and as the relationship between textual, numismatic and archaeological evidence has become more complex, the history of the conquered lands is becoming clearer, even if at the same time the questions we ask of our evidence have become more difficult. The period has been subject to revision and rethinking in ways that radically affect what we know or understand about both the area, about state-building and the economy and society of the early Islamic world, and about issues such as urbanisation, town–country relations, the ways in which a different religious culture impacted on the built environment, and about politics.

The changes which took place in the greater Syrian area during the 7th and early 8th centuries are crucial to understanding how pre-existing cultural forms, urban structures, community organisation and linguistic habits affected the evolution of the core regions of the Islamic world through into the later medieval and indeed the modern Middle East. The tensions and complementarities between clan and tribal community structures, kinship-based patterns of the exercise and transmission of power and the rights of nascent states and their rulers or élites, between urban, rural and pastoral economic activities, as well as the ways in which resources could be managed, manipulated, extracted and consumed, these are all fundamental to an appreciation of the evolution of the early Islamic political and cultural world. Yet in many cases the evidence itself is contested, unclear, ambiguous, most obviously with the partial and biased literary evidence, especially that from histories and chronicles, but also with archaeological and material cultural evidence. This has affected in particular approaches to the urban

history of the region, for example,[1] where shifts in the date-frame ascribed to a particular class of ceramics have had serious and wide-ranging implications not just for associated material and for particular sites, but for the wider east Mediterranean world and for our understanding of the processes and chronology of change across the early post-Roman period and beyond.

Many of the local differences apparent in the archaeological and written sources for Greater Syria are a reflection of the fragmented landscape and geography of the region. Ranging from the rugged country of the mountains of the Lebanon and the steppes of the great Syrian desert to the fertile plains of central Palestine and the arid reaches of the Sinai desert, Greater Syria is a zone of many micro-regional variations. In late Roman times and before, the flourishing coastal cities were connected by local and by long-distance commerce to the Aegean, North Africa and the central and western Mediterranean, but trade also penetrated far inland along routes from Antioch in the north across to the Euphrates valley and thence into Iraq, or eastwards from the central and southern coastal centres inland to Jerusalem, north-east to the limestone massif, or across to Bostra or the Hawran and thence down into the Arabian peninsula. In the north the fertile region south of Aleppo stretches down to the plain around Emesa, to the south of which the fertile plain between coast and desert fringe became ever narrower, constrained by the Lebanon and anti-Lebanon ranges. To the south again the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee, linked by the Jordan, divide the region in two, the coastal plain of Palestine to the west and to the east the regions of the Hawran and Balqa'. Such a fragmented landscape generated substantial differences in the various localities of the Greater Syria region, and these differences were played out both before and after the Islamic conquest in its widely different economic, demographic and land-use patterns, as some of the contributions to this volume will show.

The history of the 7th century in Syria is a story of continuities and slow transformations in economic respects, as far as the evidence seems to tell us, of relative continuity in the institutional order, but of substantial political and ideological shifts.[2] This is evident in several spheres. While the earliest Arab-Islamic administration of Syria, Palestine and Iraq, as well as of Egypt, relied initially on pre-existing institutional patterns and arrangements, both in respect of fiscal practices (methods of assessing and collecting "tribute" i.e. tax, for example) as well as civil administrative structures, it served an entirely new political master with very different military and ideological aims from those of its late Roman predecessor. The early *ajnād* or army-districts of Filastîn, al-Urdunn, Dimashq and Hims reflect pre-Muslim structures, although the extent and exact nature of this inheritance is unclear. It is apparent that these are not the late Roman provinces as they are known from 6th-century sources, but reflect rather military districts under the command of local officers in charge of units of *limitanei* and some field forces. Whether they reflect in addition a change in military administrative arrangements under

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[1] Kennedy 1985a and b, for major changes setting in during the middle of the 6th century; the tendency currently is to push these changes into the later 6th and 7th centuries, or beyond, depending upon region. See for example Magness 2003: 195ff.; 1999; Foote 2000.

[2] See, for example, Walmsley 1988; 2000.

Heraclius or not remains a contentious issue.[3] Furthermore, apart from references in the later Arabic tradition, there is really no evidence at all from the Greek or Syriac sources to say what happened to the provinces occupied by the Persians between about 614 and 629. We know hardly anything at all about their military or civil administration under the Sasanid régime, nor whether or not the older establishment was merely taken over by the conquerors, or whether a Persian administrative structure was established. Egypt provides useful material, since there is some important papyrological evidence for the sorts of continuity of Roman patterns of life and administration during the period of the Persian occupation of that province (619–29) – one dating formula shows that Egypt was considered to be under the rule of the Persians, but was also seen as under the rule of the Byzantine emperor in his capacity as a vassal of the Persian king.[4] It would be interesting to know whether the same assumptions were made in respect of the Syrian provinces. At the same time, however, the evidence also points to the reduction of much of the Roman Egyptian élite and its replacement by the Sasanian nobles who commanded the Persian armies and managed its fiscal system. This appears to have been a process which was continued and even intensified in the course of the Arab conquest (and later, although the evidence remains sparse, by Arabs such as ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, who reportedly built a house and selected substantial landed estates from within the conquered province).[5] To what extent a similar process occurred in Persian-occupied Syria remains unclear, but the evidence may well suggest that under the new Arab régime at least the Syrian élites suffered on a similar scale.[6] The contemporary collection of the life and miracles of Anastasius the Persian refers to a Persian military command at Caesarea in Palestine, marked by the presence of a *marzbān* and soldiers, a commissariat, and so forth; but this tells us little about the administration of civil matters. We do not know what happened to the military units stationed in the regions which were overrun – the *limitanei*, for example – and this has obvious consequences for any deductions we might make about the situation in which the Romans re-established imperial rule after 628/29. It is possible that the *ajnād* reflect some Sasanid institutional arrangement of which we know nothing, although in light of what happened in Egypt this seems a little less likely, although it cannot be discounted. The silence of the Syriac sources may be particularly significant, in view of the interest they tend to show in respect of institutional and administrative affairs.[7] What the Egyptian papyrological evidence and the Syrian sources do show, and

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[3] See Haldon 1995.

[4] Palme 2007, p. 265; in general on Sasanian rule in Egypt, Altheim-Stiehl 1992 (and cf. 1991).

[5] See Palme, 2007, p. 265 with n. 97; Sijpesteijn 2007b; and for ʿAmr see Millward 1964: 336. For the effective eradication of the pre-Islamic aristocracies (but not the minor rural élites) in the course of the conquests and the period following, see Banaji, infra, pp. 165–179.

[6] See Kennedy, Chapter 9 below; and for the fate of members of the Syrian elite in the Byzantine empire after the 640s, see Haldon 2007.

[7] For the Syriac historical tradition and the dependence of later Byzantine historians upon it, see Conrad 1990; 1992: 322ff., 386ff. For the Persians at Caesarea: Flusin 1992: Actes §18ff. (pp. 59f.). Kaegi 1992: 272 notes a later Arab tradition that former Byzantine soldiers joined

very clearly, is that late Roman fiscal administrative arrangements, including in many respects technical language and the titles of the responsible officials, remained more-or-less unchanged well into the 660s.[8]

The demographic picture of greater Syria in the years before the conquests is also relevant to the evolution of early Islamic administration in the period up to ʿAbd al-Malik. In particular, longer-term changes in respect of the increased importance of Arab federates during the first half of the 6th century played a role, especially in respect of the Ghassānids, who had come during Justinian's reign to exercise an imperially-backed hegemony over a substantial number of other clans in the area. Some scholars have argued for an orderly withdrawal of regular Roman forces from the frontier-region forts as early as the 530s.[9] While the archaeological and literary record cannot prove that there was a marked decline in imperial involvement in the frontier regions adjacent to the Syrian desert southwards before the middle of the 6th century, approximately, it does suggest a reduction in such involvement by the later 6th century, as the Ghassānid or other allied clans took over responsibility for both defence and, in some cases, fortress-maintenance,[10] and as fluidity of population and integration of new elements into the existing sedentary population took place.[11] According to a pilgrim who travelled via Nessana to Sinai in the 570s, for example, the fort there had no military character at all, having been turned to use as a hospice for travellers.[12]

The Ghassānid confederacy dominated the steppe bordering the Syrian desert, but was also employed to control other nomad groups who inhabited these eastern provinces. Relations with their leaders were always tricky, and failures of diplomacy on the Roman side could have direct consequences. After the rupture between the emperors and the Ghassānid leader in the 580s, which must be understood in the context of Ghassānid

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the Muslim forces in the conquest of Egypt. Although the tradition is uncorroborated, it is in itself not unlikely that some soldiers did change sides; possibly there were similar occurrences during the Persian occupation of Palestine and Egypt. For the military arrangements of the eastern provinces in the period between the Byzantine re-occupation and the Arab conquest, see Haldon 1993; Schmitt 2001.

8 Palme 2007, p. 265; Sijpesteijn 2007a.

9 Parker 1986; Kennedy 1992. In general on the history of both the Palestinian and the Arabian frontier regions, see Parker 1986; Bowersock 1976 (with revisions in Bowersock 1983: 104 and note 41); 1971; Graf 1978; Mayerson 1986; 1989; and esp. Sartre 1982: 121–203 for a good survey of Roman-Arab frontier relations in the period from the fifth to seventh centuries. . For discussion on the term "limes", see Mayerson 1988: 181–3; and on Palestine, Gichon 1967; Gutwein 1981: 309–14; Mayerson 1984; 1986: 44–5; and Isaac 1990: 208ff.

10 See the brief summary of Kaegi 1992: 52ff. For a general survey, see now Parker 1986: 149–55; note also Parker 1988 (with earlier and later reports in the appropriate volumes); and also the evidence from the Nessana documents, which might suggest the withdrawal of the unit based there some time before the Arab conquest. See Kraemer 1958: 5–6, 24; followed by Gutwein 1981: 93ff., both of whom argue for a withdrawal by 590; see also Mayerson 1964: 188–90.

11 See Mayerson 1989 and 1990.

12 *Itineraria Hierosolymitana saeculi IIII-VIII* (Geyer 1898): 181–2; and Mayerson 1963: 170–71.

support for Monophysite Christianity, especially in the Hawran region, their hegemony appears to have been weakened or broken; but they and other allied groups remained crucial to the Roman government in the East, both for frontier and internal security.[13] Ghassānid troops are reported to have been based in the immediately pre-conquest years in the area of the Jordan itself according to a 9th-century tradition; and it was the Ghassānids who helped crush the Samaritan revolt of 529. A Ghassānid "phylarch" may have had on at least one occasion a general military authority in Palestine II and Arabia; while the importance of the Arab allies and federates as support for the local Roman military commanders was clearly indispensable. During the period of the Persian war imperial reliance upon Bedouin allies seems to have increased, although the role of the Ghassānids in this respect remains uncertain. A later tradition notes that other allied or federated troops were established in the region to the west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea in the 630s; and although the evidence is ambiguous, Arabic sources give the impression that, by the time of the imperial victory over the Muslims at Mu'ta, which lies to the east of the Wādī ʿAraba, midway between Arindela and Zoara, in 629, the Ghassānids and a range of other tribal groups were once more close supporters of the Roman establishment in these regions.[14] Members of other clans fought on the Byzantine side during that battle; and it is well-known that early Muslim strategy was aimed specifically at detaching such groups from their Byzantine allegiance, by diplomacy, conversion or coercion.[15]

The Sasanid occupation of Syria and Palestine over the period from 613/14 to 628 must have affected the late Roman tradition of administration. There is no way of knowing to what extent this was actually the case; and if the example of Egypt is anything to go by, the effects in this sphere were probably minimal for most people

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13 See John of Ephesos (Brooks 1952): 132, for the Ghassānid "revolt" and the conflict between their leader al-Mundir and the *dux Arabiae* at Bostra in 581, a result of the imperial withdrawal of subsidies and allowances. On the Ghassānids in connection with their Monophysitism, see Shahid, art. "Ghassanids"; Donner 1981: 43f.; Sartre 1982: 189ff. In general on Roman-Arab relations, see Shahid 1984, 1988 and 1995.

14 Kaegi 1992: 53f. On the phylarchs and their role and on the "over-phylarchate" established by Justinian, see Shahid 1959: 339ff.; 1955; Gutwein 1981: 314ff. Cf. Procopius, *De Bello Persico* i, 19.8–13; ii, 3.41; and Malalas, 446 (Jeffreys, Jeffreys and Scott 1986: 261) for the "phylarch of Palestine" in the suppression of the revolt of 529. Mayerson 1964: 189, note 109, does not believe that the phylarchs had any authority over territory within the empire itself, although the sources merely suggest as a military commander of allied troops, the phylarch operated at times within the empire. According to Balādhurī 223, 224, there existed camps for such federate or allied troops (and their families) near Qinnasrīn and Aleppo in the pre-conquest period; see Shahid 1984: 401ff., followed by Kaegi 1992: 55, 91–2 for similar encampments near other towns, for example. The commander of these forces had no civil administrative jurisdiction, even if, as Shahid argued, the title phylarch was an officially recognised, formal appellation (a view rejected by Mayerson, who sees it is an unofficial, descriptive term. See Mayerson 1991). For other groups in the area west of the Jordan, see Donner 1981: 105; and for the battle of Mu'ta, ibid. 101, 103, 105 (and Kaegi 1992: 71ff.); on the Ghassānids, Donner 1981: 107f.

15 Kennedy 1986: 60; Hasan 1978: 59–62.

except the upper echelons of the landowning élite.[16] On the other hand, the continuity of Roman occupation and the loyalties and political-cultural identities of the population of the areas concerned must have been affected. Mayerson and Donner have stressed that, by the time of the Roman re-occupation, there will have existed a whole generation who will have had no experience or only the dimmest memory of Roman authority. The Ghassānid phylarchate itself may have ceased to exist; and real Byzantine authority seems to have reached only to the most north-easterly regions of Palestine III, although representatives of Roman political and ecclesiastical organisation were established in towns such as Ayla (Eilat), and Ma'an near Petra. In these conditions, a re-organisation of the military districts and possibly of some civil districts may well have occurred, and this may well be that reflected through the Arab *ajnād*. A passage of Theophanes records a *vicarius* named Theodore, together with Arab allies, defeating the Muslim raid at Mu'ta, and suggests that Roman military authority continued to be exercised in this region and northwards (even if the troops themselves were Arab federates and allies); but all the evidence points to the fact that no defensive arrangements for Palestine III were restored – reliance on subsidies and peaceful co-existence, together with the threat of military reprisals from the *dux* at Caesarea, some distance away (or possibly Petra), and allied Bedouin troops, were assumed to be adequate. The Romans appear to have assumed that they would have the continued support of the population of towns such as Ayla, which guarded the entrance to the "back door" of Palestine and the routes to Gaza from the Arabian peninsula; when such towns accepted Muslim overlordship, of course, as occurred in 630, this strategy was fatally compromised. And this seems to have been the principle on which the security of this region had been based since the 570s or 580s.[17]

The pattern of administration reflected through the later Arab *ajnād* reflects also these developments. Whether the later establishment of a large number of mints (albeit often at sites where older, pre-fifth-century mints had existed) from the 680s illustrates their new fiscal priorities and the fact that they did not simply follow the pre-existing arrangements without modifying them to suit their own requirements must remain uncertain.[18] The *jund* of Jordan (al-Urdunn), for example, represented an expanded

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16 See above, with notes 4–6. There is a growing literature on Sasanid administration more generally, see Christensen 1944 : 113–16, 122–6, 132–40; Lukonin 1983; and Gyselen 1989 and 2002 (especially for the sigillographic evidence for administrative structures); Wiesehöfer 1996: 186–91. See also Bivar 1969, and Göbl 1976, for seals and discussion, with the additional remarks of Howard-Johnston 1995: 216–18; Gnoli 2001; and Gignoux 2004; 1984.

17 For the "Roman" presence at Ayla, see Donner 1981: 109 with notes 90, 91; Mayerson 1964: 175f.; and Balādhurī: 92–3. See also Gutwein 1981: 137–40, 339; Alt 1936. For the effects of the Sassanid occupation, and the re-establishment of Byzantine authority, Donner 1981: 99–101; Mayerson 1964: 174f.; and for Ayla and the Gaza route Mayerson 1964: 162–4; 169–77; and 192ff., 197–9 for Heraclius' possible strategy after 628, with Kaegi's critical remarks, 1992: 93 and note 21. See in particular Schmitt 2001.

18 For the mints, see Foss 2008: 81–3; and for a brief history of the coinages of greater Syria in the 7th century, esp. the so-called Arab-Byzantine series, ibid., 3–40, with literature and sources.

province of Palestine II, with the anomalous stretch of Phoenice extending in a narrow strip along the coast south of the river Laitah (Leontes), and with the westernmost section of Arabia and part of north-west Palestine I. If its territory indeed reflected some late Roman or possibly Heraclian administrative re-arrangement, then the precise reasons for this change, if it does not reflect a Sasanid administrative innovation, remain shrouded in mystery. The sources are silent on the subject. But such adjustments of boundaries are not in the least unusual in the history of Roman provincial administration. Internal security together with the efficacy – which appears to have been taken for granted – of the Ghassānids or their equivalent along the frontier steppe may well have played a role. It is significant, perhaps, that the "new" district of al-Urdunn included north Samaria and Galilee, both areas of strong anti-Roman sentiment. Their populations clearly supported and welcomed the Persians for a while during the wars of the reign of Heraclius; and it is also notable that the area offered virtually no resistance to the Arabs – the capital, Tiberias, capitulated (the first time, at least) without a struggle.[19]

Some continuity of administrative arrangements, then, seems highly likely. The initial arrangements for issuing coin with which both to pay the conquering soldiers as well as to maintain the economic life of the regions they had taken seem to reflect this to a degree, both in respect of the large number of mints which were established soon after the conquest, as well as in terms of the large-scale import into northern Syria of regular Byzantine issues into the later 650s (the exact reasons for which remain unclear). But from about 658 the empire appears to have reduced the production of the bronze coinage and restricted the areas to which consignments were despatched, a move which has been associated with the probable internal restructuring of tax-collecting mechanisms.[20] Its effects on the money supply within the conquered provinces of Syria are again unclear, but further research may clarify this question.[21]

Another sphere in which continuity rather than disruption or rapid change is evident is that of urbanism and the relationship between town and country. In Syria, cities shared in the same general trends and developments as those in other regions of the empire, but only until the late 630s. As many studies have now shown, there had been a slow process of transformation in the pattern of late Roman urban society over the centuries preceding both the Persian wars and the Arab-Islamic conquests. Archaeological work demonstrates a revival in the fortunes of many eastern cities in the later 5th and early 6th centuries, accompanied by substantial investment in public and private buildings often on a monumental scale; it also shows a fairly widespread tendency for many urban centres to lose many of the features familiar from their classical structure, the lesser provincial towns first, followed at a somewhat later date by larger,

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19 Balādhurī: 179; for detailed discussion of the origins of the junds and their late Roman antecedents, see Haldon 1995.

20 See Phillips and Goodwin 1997: 75ff. ; Hendy 1985: 641; on state policies and intervention at this point, see in general Brandes 2002: 281–368, 418–26 (although the major shift in emissions is here misdated to the years from 668, rather than – as Hendy and others have clearly shown – already during the reign of Constans II, from 658).

21 See the chapters by Walmsley and Foss, *infra*.

economically and politically more important centres. Indeed, the period from the 4th to early 7th century is generally seen as an era when public spaces were being lost as a result of lack of concern on the part of both civic elites and the government.[22] In a number of cases, certainly, major public buildings fell into disrepair, systems of water-supply were abandoned (suggesting a drop in population), rubbish was dumped in abandoned buildings, major thoroughfares were built on. But this was by no means a universal phenomenon, and in fact in many examples, while smaller streets were encroached upon by both dwellings and other structures, major thoroughfares, streets and shopping areas were kept open and clearly in regular use.[23] Well into the Umayyad period colonnaded streets were being constructed,[24] even if shifts in the focus of commercial life can also be shown to have taken place across the period from the 5th into the 7th century.[25] Even in urban centres where encroachment on public spaces did occur, such changes may not necessarily have involved any substantial reduction in economic or exchange activity, and they happened at differentiated rates across the different provinces of the empire according to local economic and political conditions. The construction of defensive walls around many cities during the 5th and 6th centuries has generally been interpreted as a shrinking of occupied areas of many cities, but this may not always have been the case, and reflected also shifts in cultural perceptions about the symbolic value of walls and defensive structures.[26] Thus, while there were a number of significant changes in respect of the maintenance of public structures or amenities in many major, traditional Hellenistic-Roman cities – baths, aqueducts, drains, street-surfaces, walls – this does not necessarily have to suggest a major shift in every aspect of urban living or of finance and administration. While the period after the arrival of the great Justinianic plague in the 540s is certainly marked in this respect, this shift is partly balanced by evidence for a considerable and widespread investment in church building (and related structures) of all kinds. An additional factor was the evolution of a more complex hierarchy of urbanism as many functions of the older cities began to be shared from the 4th century on by smaller centres, often fortified, and often the focus of military or civil administration as well as of local exchange and production for their localities.[27]

The archaeological evidence thus shows up strong regional variations, in particular a divergent trend between Anatolia and the European provinces of the empire, on the one hand, and Syria-Palestine and Egypt, on the other. Cities in the latter continued to flourish well into the 7th century and beyond, whereas much of Anatolia and the Balkans suffered from economic contraction, urban recession and demographic decline, in many cases setting in already by the mid-6th century. North Syria may also have experienced a different rate of change, beginning somewhat earlier, compared with the

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22 See for example Baldini Lippolis 2007; Saradi 2006: 271–94.

23 As at Sagalassos, for example: Lavan 2008.

24 Ward-Perkins 1995; Lavan 2006.

25 See, for example, Patlagean 1977: 59–61, 233ff.; Roueché 1989: 230.

26 Vanhaverbeke et al. 2004: 253 (Sagalassos); Gregory 1982 (Corinth and other Greek cities); Niewöhner 2008, on Miletus.

27 Dunn 1998; 2004; Morrisson and Sodini 2002: 179–81.

areas to the south.[28] If this interpretation of the available evidence is accepted, it has important implications for the early stages of Islamic political development and the economies of the conquered territories. As one commentator has noted, the study of urbanism needs to be situated within the broader context of the political and economic structures of which it forms a key element, rather than taken in isolation. Recent work for the medieval west, the Byzantine world and the early Islamic Near East has increasingly begun to approach the issue of urban and rural demography, patterns of settlement and of land-use from this perspective.[29] The pattern of village communities in the east Roman world likewise varied from region to region, but in general it is the case that the vast majority of urban centres served as central places and thus also as markets for their surrounding districts and, until substantial changes occurred during the middle and later 7th century in what remained under imperial control in Anatolia and the Balkans, rural communities. Villages and more isolated farmsteads proliferated and there appears to have been a considerable expansion of such rural habitats across the late Roman world in the east from the 4th and in particular from the 5th century, associated with both a recession in villa-type estates and farms, on the one hand, and on the other a shift in the hierarchy of settlement towards an increase in the number and density of what have been referred to as "secondary", often fortified, towns with their adjacent and "dependent" villages.[30] As well as being found in several regions in Anatolia, this pattern is also found in the southern Hawran, the Decapolis and central Jordan plain, southern Jordan,[31] and elsewhere.[32] There were thus in the years from the later 5th into the 7th century considerable fluctuations in respect of the relationship between the populations of urban and rural regions and in terms of their density.

An equally weighty issue which remains problematic is the extent and effect of the endemic plague in the period from the 6th to the 8th century, especially since it seems clear that the degree of regional and even local variation was substantial.[33] Given the contradictory character of much of the written evidence and the ambivalence of the archaeology it is difficult to arrive at generally acceptable overall conclusions about the precise effects of the epidemic.[34] Broadly speaking, it has been assumed that there was a

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28 See Morony 2004: 178–80, with literature, following Ward-Perkins 2002a: 354–61, and Morrisson and Sodini 2002: 190–93, where the evidence and further literature are summarised; also Walmsley 2000. For continuing prosperity and expansion in many areas of southern Syria and in Palestine beyond the middle of the 7th century, see now Magness 2003.

29 See Smith 2003: 189–90; Chavarria and Lewit 2004.

30 Morrison and Sodini 2002: 175–9 provide a brief summary with literature.

31 See Baird 2004; Vanhaverbeke et al. 2004; Gatier 2005 (north Syria); MacAdam 1994; Schick 1995: 17–48, 49–93; 1994: 133–54; and Walmsley 2005.

32 Central Syria and the limestone massif: Kennedy and Liebeschuetz 1988; Foss 1995; Lycia, Isauria, Cilicia: Foss 1994; Mitchell 1993; Macedonia: Dunn 2004; Greece: Alcock 1993; Avramea 1997.

33 McCormick 2007; Conrad 1996.

34 See the material assembled by Morony 2007: 72–81; and compare with, for example, Walmsley 2000 and 2005; Conrad 1994.

long downward curve in population in the Roman empire during the late ancient period, although with very marked regional variations, which continued into the later 7th and 8th centuries in what was left of the empire after the first Islamic conquests. But in the case of greater Syria, the archaeological evidence would now suggest a marked regional upturn during the 5th and 6th centuries, as well as for Mesopotamia and southern Iraq (albeit also with sub-regional variations, in particular in respect of urban-rural distinctions),[35] with a possible downturn only much later, perhaps in the course of the 8th century.[36] The impact of the plague across the period is difficult to extrapolate from the available data.

Most urban centres surrendered to the Arabs without much struggle. Yet although it is clear that many towns continued to flourish, we still find a fundamental shift in their role. They often became centres of Muslim administration, and the administrators of local justice and tax-collection tended also to reside there. They never recover their former corporate identity, and their prosperity now depends upon their role as centres of commerce and exchange, as administrative centres for the new administration, and as foci for religious endowments. But the difference between the urban centres of what was left of the Byzantine state and those of the Caliphate is pronounced – those in the Caliphate in many cases continuing to prosper and to flourish, whereas those in the crisis-ridden Byzantine empire suffering from the dislocation of both their economic and political environment. The evidence for coin distribution demonstrates the continued widespread and intensive use of copper coins throughout former imperial territories now under Islamic control, where the archaeological as well as numismatic material shows virtually no disruption to the patterns of economic activity which had been established before the 630s, even if it demonstrates a shift in networks of distribution from the early 8th century onwards.[37] The evidence of ceramic distribution in particular supports such a picture, even if it also suggests changes in the patterns and direction of travel of much of the material. But pottery produced in Syria and Palestine was still reaching western Asia Minor and farther afield through the second half of the 7th and into the 8th century, suggestive of both the economic dynamism of the exporting regions as well as the continuing connections and demand from the importing localities.[38] And it is not just the archaeology that supports the picture of a comparatively flourishing urban life

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35 Banaji 2001: 16–18, 214–19; Wilkinson 1990: I, 117–28; Ward-Perkins 2000b: 320–27 (but emphasising the chronological and regional fluctuations and inflections); Foss 1997: 259–61; Morrisson and Sodini 2002: 174–6.

36 For the tailing off of expansion, and subsequent contraction in the later 6th century, see Kennedy 1985a and b. As noted, the tendency currently is to push these changes into the later 6th and 7th centuries, or beyond, depending upon region. See for example Magness 2003: 195ff.; 1999.

37 See Gatier 2005; MacAdam 1994; Tsafrir and Foerster 1994 for generalised continuity in central and northern Syria, Palestine and western Jordan. On the coinage: Walmsley 2000: 332–9; Domascewica and Bates 2002; Foss 1999 and 2008: 18–55, 112–18; Phillips and Goodwin 1997.

38 See Walmsley 2000; Sodini 2000; Vroom 2004 and 2007.

and a strong element of urban cultural continuity across Syria after the initial Islamic conquests. The thriving debates among representatives of the different churches in the east, as well as between Christians and Muslims, exemplified in the cultural life of late 7th- and early 8th-century Edessa and the writings of men such as Jacob of Edessa, a contemporary of Anastasios of Sinai, are illustrative.[39]

Such differences between Anatolia and Syria are not simply a result of the Islamic conquests or of the economic dislocation caused by warfare in either Asia Minor or the Balkans, but rather of longer-term regional variations already evident in the preceding period. There were other important regional variations: the numismatic, ceramic and textual evidence for Cyprus, which was thought to have suffered disaster at the hands of the Arabs in the middle of the 7th century, suggests that in fact it remained a major producer and exporter of table- and kitchen-wares to the Levant and southern Anatolia well into the 8th century.[40] Greater Syria is hardly an exception, but represents one of a range of possible outcomes following the breakdown of a unified eastern Mediterranean zone of social and cultural exchange. The situation in the former Sasanian heartlands of Iraq as well as in the wealthiest of all the east Roman provinces, Egypt, offer further nuances in this general picture. Things did not stay the same – quite the reverse: the general shifts in the economic networks of the central and eastern Mediterranean impacted upon Greater Syria, Iraq, Egypt and N. Africa as much as anywhere else. But in the context of the conquest and of a new ruling elite and its needs, this had a radical effect on patterns of consumption, production and distribution of resources, and administration. This, then, is the background against which the following chapters, dealing with the broader picture of change in the former eastern provinces of the Roman state, including Egypt, are to be set.

Acknowledgement

Maps 0.1 and 0.2 based on J.F. Haldon, *The Palgrave Atlas of Byzantine History* (Basingstoke-New York 2005)

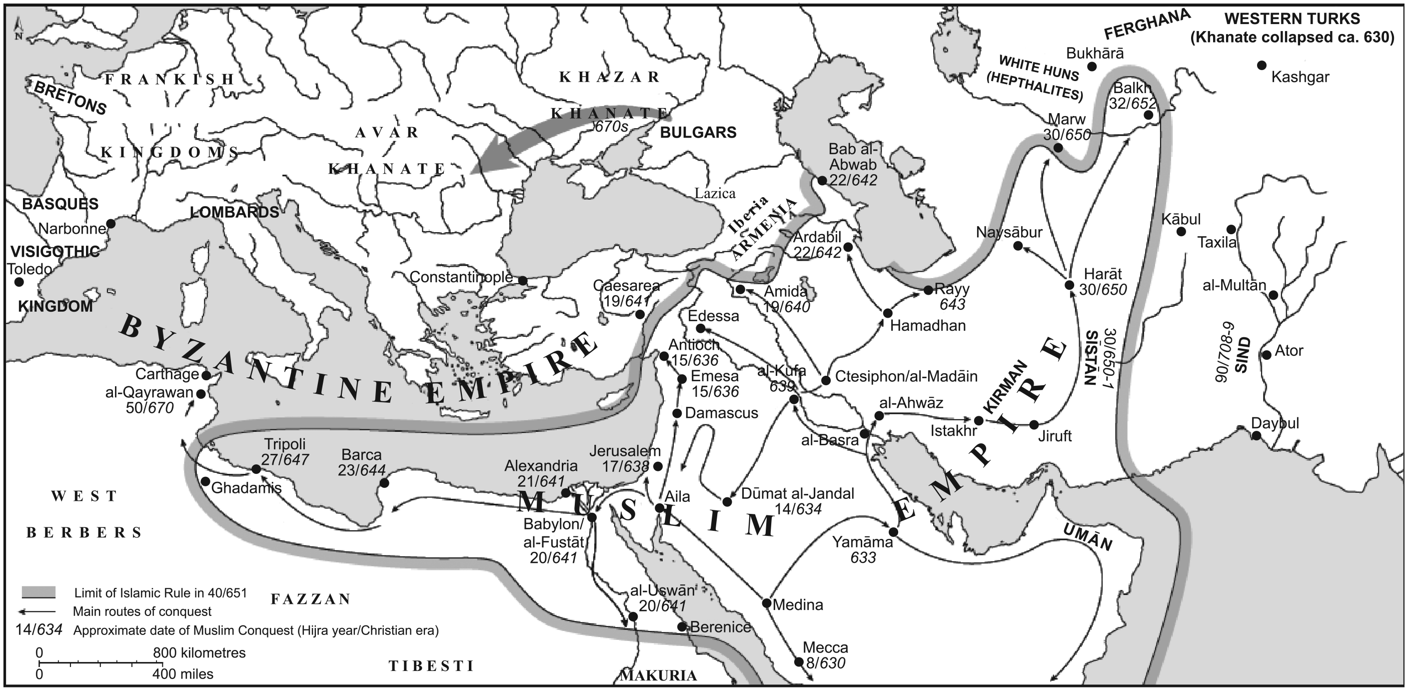
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[39] For Jacob of Edessa, see Baumstark 1922: 248–56; and for debates between the faiths Cook 1981: 145–58; Becker 1924–32.

[40] Armstrong 2009. Sicily is another example, from where the evidence again suggests continuing commercial activity and a less-distrupted pattern of economic life: Morrisson 1998 and 1995.



Map 0.1 Greater Syria in context ca. 600 CE



Map 0.2 Greater Syria and the expansion of Islam ca. 632–60

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Chapter 1

Coinage and the Economy of Syria-Palestine in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries CE

Alan Walmsley

Understanding the production (minting), distribution and circulation of coinage in Syria-Palestine during the 7th and 8th centuries has undergone far-reaching improvements in recent decades. In the last few years progress has been especially swift, over which time the implications of these advances have also been steadily – and increasingly – applied to an understanding of the early Islamic economy, and ever more successfully so.[1] By this means a valuable dynamic between coin studies and historical endeavour is being forged, and few would now question that "progress does seem to have been made in breaking down the divisions between 'coin people' and 'historians'".[2] Although still in a formative stage, this new collaboration is offering fresh insights into major social developments that characterized the crucial late antique – early Islamic transitional period. This paper serves to highlight some of these developments with a focus on the mid-7th to mid-8th century in Syria-Palestine/Bilād al-Shām, although placed within a wider chronological framework. The study brings together recent work on identifying mints, minting authorities, known coin types, and the geographical distribution of coins based on an ever increasing number of archaeological site finds (unprovenanced hoards are not considered). Through a cross-disciplinary analysis of this material, in which coin profiles are compared with other archaeological material, fresh perspectives are drawn on the way coinage – notably its production and spread – serves to identify major changes to social and economic conditions in Bilād al-Shām during the late antique – early Islamic transitional period.

Mints

Most of the mints at which coins in gold (*dīnār*, pl. *danānīr*), silver (*dirham*, pl. *darāhim*) and especially the many copper types (*fals*, pl. *fūlūs*) were struck in early Islamic Bilād al-Shām were conveniently identified in John Walker's pioneering and still valuable study of early Islamic coinage, mostly complied from the collection at the British Museum.[3] In the last two decades, a small number of further mints have been identified and the operation

[1] See Morrisson 2002 for Byzantine parallels.

[2] Phillips 2004: 14; see also Goodwin 2004.

[3] Walker 1956.

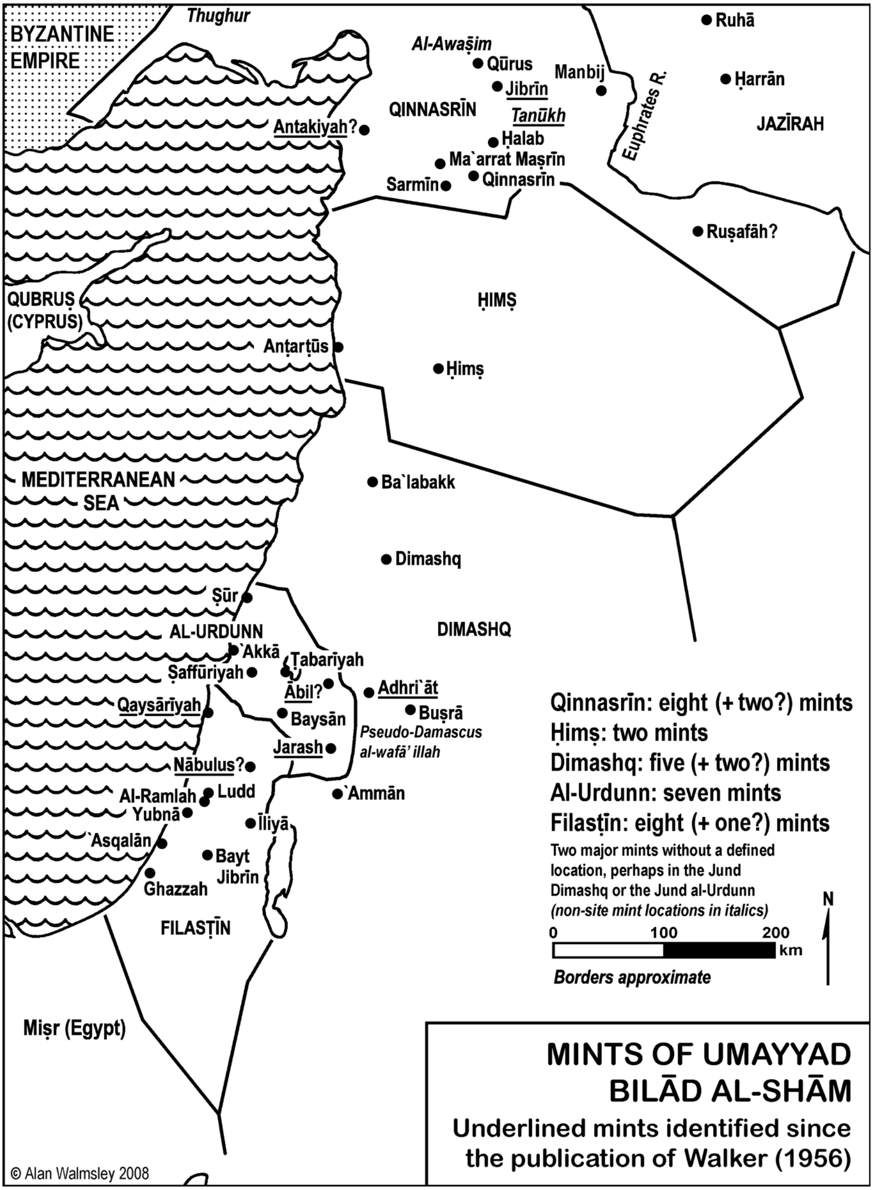


Figure 1.1 Mints of Umayyad Bilād al-Shām, by province (jund). Source: author, 2008, based on Album and Goodwin 2002, Bone 2000, Goussous 2004, Ilisch 1993, Ilisch 1996, Walker 1956

of others clarified, and today a very clear map of minting activity in Bilād al-Shām can be compiled (Figure 1.1). To an extent that verges on the unduly repetitive, it has often been stated that a remarkable feature of coin production in the 7th and 8th centuries was the multiplication of towns that minted coins when compared to late Roman practices, a point emphasized by Walker. However, the connection to Classical-period traditions may be considerably more indirect than Walker suggests: "It is of interest to observe that in many instances the freshly created mints were really ancient, pre-Byzantine, mints of Classical times resuscitated, a *truly remarkable phenomenon*" (my emphasis).[4] In a post-colonial world, such a statement should be read for what it is.

Since Walker, a few more minting centres in Bilād al-Shām have been identified (Figure 1.1, underlined names); however, most of the advances have been in allocating additional and sometimes new coin varieties to already known mints. Stephen Album and Tony Goodwin's expansive study of the pre-reform (so-called "Arab-Byzantine") coins at the Ashmolean Museum has brought these discoveries together, notably the recognition of Jarash as a mint for pre- and post-reform copper coins,[5] and the identification and probable regional location of three uncertain and unexplained mints: the *al-wafā' lillah* mint and the "pseudo-Damascus" mint in the north Jordan – southern Syria area, and the Tanūkh mint in north Syria.[6] While Goodwin views the first two as located in the Jund al-Urdunn, stylistically they plead for inclusion in the Jund Dimashq, and if any location as such is necessary for each mint Buṣrā or even al-Jābīyah are very likely candidates. Lutz Ilisch, as repeated by Goodwin,[7] has suggested that Tanūkh is not a place but the name of the minting authority, specifically the ecclesiastical administration of the Tanūkh tribe, a plausible and important proposition on which see further below. Andrew Oddy has, furthermore, proposed Ābil in the far northeast of the Jund al-Urdunn as a mint in the pre-reform twin seated figure type of Baysān and Jarash,[8] but this could be Arbela (Irbid), where the governor of the *trichōra* of Jadar, Bayt Rās and Ābil apparently made his base, as revealed in the self-martyrdom of St Peter of Capitolias.[9] Unfortunately, the surviving text on the few known coins is too garbled to be sure at this stage. Nayef Goussous, in the huge catalogue of his collection housed in the Jordan National Bank Numismatic Museum, also identifies rare issues from Adhri'āt (Jund Dimashq), Qaysārīya (Jund Filasṭīn) and perhaps Antākīya (Jund Qinnasrīn).[10]

This short presentation identifying the functioning Umayyad mints in Bilād al-Shām leaves little doubt about the active – almost hyperactive – state of the monetary economy in the 7th and 8th centuries.[11] In all, some 30 to 33 towns/localities of the

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4 Walker 1956: xciii.

5 Album and Goodwin 2002: 82, 89; earlier, Naghawi 1989.

6 Album and Goodwin 2002: 87, 90, 96.

7 Album and Goodwin 2002: 96.

8 Oddy 2004a.

9 The apparent irrationality of Peter's behaviour is presented in Hoyland 1997: 354–60; Peeters 1939, but other factors may have been at play, as outlined below.

10 Goussous 2004: 325–30, 373, 421–2.

11 Oddy 2004b; Walmsley 2007.

approximately 68 to 73 provincial and district capitals of early Islamic Bilād al-Shām have been positively identified as coin minting centres. That is, almost half (45%) of the administrative centres in the five ajnād functioned as a mint at one time or another, but not equally either in the quantity of coins produced or the length of time a town functioned as a mint. The main structural difference with the first three quarters of the 6th century, when money sourced from central mints of the empire underpinned urban and rural economies, was the growing and, in part, enforced self-sufficiency in local coin supply, a process instigated early in the 7th century.[12] Why one town became a mint and another did not, or at least failed to become an important mint, in the 7th century did not always seem to relate to matters of urban seniority, to the extent that can be assessed in this period. Glaringly apparent from Figure 1.1 is the absence of any coastal mints for the Jund Dimashq and only rare minting at sites along the coast of Ḥimṣ and Qinnasrīn, activity in north Filastīn characterized by limited production of only post reform coins at Qayāsrīya and Nābulus but none at Sabastīya,[13] and the much reduced number of mints in the Jund Ḥimṣ compared to the other ajnād, although this lack was compensated by the huge output of coin by the urban mint of Ḥimṣ. Nābulus is an inexplicable omission as the source of any pre-reform issue if it was entrusted with minting coins under Heraclius,[14] a suggestion that seems untenable in this light. The Neapolis on these coins presents, rather, as a Cypriot military mint, given the large number of coins from the reigns of Phocas, Heraclius and Constans II recovered on that island.[15] The economic significance of these different factors, and their social implications, are important in understanding change in the period (as will be explored later in this paper), and hence the need to spent time on them at this point.

Coin Types and Chronology

The extent of monetary economic activity in Bilād al-Shām during the 7th and 8th centuries is categorically proven by the range and volume of coinage, especially market-place base coinage, minted in the towns. As numismatists take a greater interest in the pre-reform and post-reform coinage of early Islamic Bilād al-Shām, it has become incumbent on archaeologists to take seriously site coin finds of all periods. An adequate treatment of Islamic, and especially transitional, coins has not always been the case in the past; hence the utter confusion surrounding the Nessana coin finds,[16] a situation made even more frustrating given the expert treatment of coins from other early excavations

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12 Noeske 2000, but see further below; Walmsley 1999.

13 For Nābulus, see Bone 2002: 172–3. The identification remains questionable, and if correct indicates a limited production of post-reform coins at Nābulus. This coin type was once ascribed to Bāniyās (Ilisch 1993: 26), except that Bāniyās appears to have constituted part of the Jund Dimashq, whereas the coins are firmly of a Filasṭīn variety.

14 Donald 1986; 1987; de Roever 1991.

15 Noeske 2000: 426–47.

16 Bellinger 1962; heroic but disheartening reconsideration in Goodwin 2005.

such as Antioch.[17] However, still unresolved is the puzzling dichotomy between the many known types and frequencies of pre-reform transitional coins known through the antiquities market and the much lower numbers recovered through archaeological work. Marcus Phillips discounts the role of modern forgeries,[18] although perhaps a little too casually, but the root cause is very likely the poor recovery and publication record of many excavations, especially material recovered from hastily-treated and annoying "post-interesting" levels.

Unquestionably, the 7th century triumphed as probably the most inventive and adaptable age in the monetary history of Bilād al-Shām. This century, once dismissed as uninteresting and insignificant by historians and archaeologists alike, culminated in the production of a well-known tripartite coinage series in gold, silver and copper characterized by Kūfic, often Qur'ānic, passages extolling Allah and his Prophet Muḥammad. Yet, the century-long prologue that was to culminate, perhaps unexpectedly, in this new monetary order is remarkable for the insights it gives into a number of economic and social developments that characterized the period.

Coinage circulating in Syria-Palestine during the 7th century can be divided into five major categories, based on style and chronology.[19]

1 *Standard Byzantine* issues in copper and gold, which in Bilād al-Shām consisted of:

a. folles minted under Heraclius (610–41) and Constans II (641–68) and arriving in Bilād al-Shām as official shipments and/or through trade; an almost complete end to supply around 660 coincided with the foundation of the Umayyad caliphate;

b. gold solidi, sourced from Byzantium until the later 680s until replaced by 'Abd al-Malik's reformed dīnār, seemingly in reply to the depiction of Christ holding the Gospels on the solidi of Justinian II (685–95, 705–11);

c. Significantly, the introduction and distribution of this coinage was not constant in 7th-century Bilād al-Shām, in that it is much more common in northern areas and which can, only in part, be explained by geographical proximity.

2 *Byzantine Proxy 1*, an early substitute copper coinage replicating current and, importantly, earlier Byzantine issues produced during the Sāsānid period (611/14–628), perhaps minted at Ḥimṣ but questionable given the popularity of the Justin II and Sophia type in *Palaestina Secunda* and its popular, mid-7th century, duplication there.

3 *Byzantine Proxy 2*, another (continuation?) substitute copper coinage made in the 650s to 660s/670s, heavily dependent on the scrappy issues of Constans

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[17] Miles 1948.

[18] Phillips 2004: 28 fn.12.

[19] Album and Goodwin 2002; Foss 2004; Pottier and Foss 2004.

II and hence Goodwin's name "pseudo-Byzantine",[20] but there is no reason to doubt the legality of this coinage in Bilād al-Shām.

4 *Transitional Byzantine-Muslim* issues (about 660–80), mostly copper but some gold, in which the image of a specific Byzantine emperor was substituted by a generalized "regal" figure neither Byzantine emperor nor caliph, while overall the series adhered to a locally set level of conformity in size, weight and imagery, suggesting growing provincial co-ordination.

5 *Standing Caliph Series* (690s), with which the intention of producing a standardized and centralized coinage becomes abundantly clear; overall, there were more similarities than differences in iconography and metrology between provinces.

Scrutinizing the numismatic results of this determined effort by the issuing authorities to supply adequate small change and, less systematically and effectively, precious coinage to the market place, a number of interlinking points of major significance stand out as directly relevant to the economic and social history of 7th-century Bilād al-Shām. The initial if somewhat hesitant attempts at meeting the need for small change were localized minting initiatives that mimicked Byzantine types still in circulation, but the rapid maturation into a specifically Islamic coinage by the end of the 7th century was a reflection of much loftier social objectives spawned by the growing political consciousness of the Marwānid Umayyads. In this development, a reliance on Byzantine coinage and imitations was replaced by new coin types intentionally removed in imagery and language from Byzantine models, although not yet completely disconnected from them. With the eclipse of the standing caliph series, an immediately recognizable Islamic coinage overtly epigraphic in character was introduced that, within decades, almost completely blotted out earlier coinages (an exception being a few hoards kept for their metal value),[21] both as a monetary instruments and vehicles of social memory. The socio-economic process was, progressively, thus:

- informal ⇨ sanctioned
- regional ⇨ centralized

These changes were indicative of an increasingly institutionalized approach to the organization of government structures. The need for coinage was well understood at all levels of administration, and within a few decades the upper echelons of government – the Marwānid Umayyads – came to appreciate the powerful social message coins could convey. Compared to the Dome of the Rock, which played (albeit loudly) to a narrow audience around Jerusalem, the reformed Islamic coinage carried its explicit message into everyone's home, their purses, and their daily activities throughout the realm, even remote places.

20 Album and Goodwin 2002: 77–81.

21 Walmsley f.c.-a.

Minting Authorities

Who authorized the minting of pre-reformed coins in the 7th century and, more importantly, what was their motivation? The standing caliph and post-reform series can be squarely placed in the ambitions of a increasingly centralizing caliphate headed by ʿAbd al-Malik, but what of the diffuse precursory series? On these questions recent scholarship has made substantial advances, with further implications for the economic and social history of Bilād al-Shām.

The first, irregular, coins of the 7th century – the Sāsānid-period series (Byzantine Proxy 1) – can be attributed to a local authority, perhaps one centred on Ḥimṣ.[22] While this is Pottier's preference, the later enthusiastic adoption of the Justin II and Sophia type as the preferred coinage minted in Baysān and Jarash questions the assumption of only one place of production and suggests additional more southerly places of minting, possibly including Skythopolis/Baysān, still then capital of *Palaestina Secunda*. A re-examination of coins ascribed to Justin II and Sophia from excavations in the towns of the former Decapolis, many published without photographs, may shed important light on this matter. Nevertheless, that this first substitutive coinage was sanctioned by an ecclesiastical authority is clear from the gallant, if not always quite successful, attempt at faithfully replicating existing official Byzantine types, resplendent with imperial regalia and Christian symbols. The important feature of this coinage was, unquestionably, *replication*: an attempt to produce a faithful copy of a known original with the intention of ensuring widespread acceptance in the market place. This coinage indicates that, before the arrival of Islam in Bilād al-Shām, the administrative and legal tasks undertaken in towns were increasingly handled by the local Church hierarchy and its bishops, not simply by default but with an important proactive element intended to strengthen the local church, Melkite or Monophysite, and with an eye firmly fixed on maintaining economic health. The Sāsānid occupation of Bilād al-Shām seemingly established many economic and social precedents that set the conditions for a relatively effortless and trouble-free consolidation of Muslim political dominion over Bilād al-Shām after the 630s, in which the Church played a leading role.[23]

Byzantine Proxy 2, while a much larger and more widely produced series geographically and stylistically, represents the continuation, administratively and legally, of the Byzantine Proxy 1 type, and little chronological break should be expected between the two, if at all. In essence, the iconographic and linguistic traditions of Byzantine coinage were preserved to the extent the local die cutters were able to duplicate them. Once again, sanctioning the production of this coinage should be attributed to the ecclesiastical administrators of towns, such as with Ḥimṣ or Tanūkh, the latter in reference – as already noted – not to a place but the church administration serving the tribe of that name.[24]

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22 Pottier and Foss 2004.

23 Shboul 1996: 90.

24 Ḥimṣ: Oddy 2003; Tanūkh: Lutz Ilisch in Album and Goodwin 2002: fn. 72; historical background to the Tanūkh in Shboul 1996: 85–6; see also Morrisson 2002: 913 (with references)

Perceptible cracks in the cultural empathy and political alliance of the minting authorities appear in a most tangible way with the Transitional Byzantine-Muslim coinage of ca. 660–80. Currently a somewhat broad categorization that does not sufficiently recognize important distinctions in language (Greek, Arabic) or symbolism (e.g. with or without Christian images), this locally-mandated coinage introduced new visual concepts overtly political and cultural in intent.[25] Authority was allocated to and asserted by the minting town, for example Baysān and Jarash, and over time both language and urban identifier was transposed from Greek to Arabic, hence:

- Skythopolēs ⇨ Baysan
- CKYΘOPOLHC ⇨ بيسن
- Gerason ⇨ Jarash
- ΓЄPACON ⇨ جرش

Nevertheless, the responsible authority was probably still the Church, or at least its officials, although perhaps operating increasingly under guidance (instruction?) from an outside authority, as the somewhat greater uniformity of the series suggests. Significantly, the coinage is 'de-Byzantinized'. A magisterial imperial-like image is retained, but one manifestly stripped of Christian politico-religious symbols. The message being conveyed is, seemingly, the proclamation of a new royal line stripped of expected dynastic identifiers, specifically the Christian symbol of the cross. This was the purse-equivalent of the Six Kings of Qusayr 'Amra fresco but, as with the case of the limited audience of the Dome of the Rock, the coins were intended for much wider dissemination. This reformation may have begun under Mu'āwiyah, and into that could be easily slotted the proposed gold coins of the first Umayyads.[26] The implications of this abandonment of the cross are significant, but may not have been directed specifically at Christians or the Church or Christianity as such in Bilād al-Shām, but their hitherto political representative (the Byzantine emperor), who asserted a claim over the former lands of the empire – especially the Holy City – and his subjects still resident in Bilād al-Shām. Also in this context could be explained the abrupt cutting off of coin shipments from Byzantium in ca. 658–60/680s; but then again, monetary supply and circulation significantly declined within the Byzantine realm after the 660s.[27]

Consequently, the appearance of the Standing Caliph Series under 'Abd al-Malik in the 690s should come as no surprise.[28] Until his reforms there was little that could be called accidental in the production of coinage for the market place in the 7th century, but with 'Abd al-Malik the intention is readily obvious: the production of a clearly Islamic tripartite coinage that, in response to provocation within and outside of the Islamic world

on the role of local authorities until at least the 680s.

25 For the use of coinage as an ideological weapon, see Johns 2003.

26 Correctly by Foss 2002.

27 Morrisson 2002: 955–7, but less so in Constantinople.

28 Implications discussed in Johns 2003: 429–32.

(Muslim rebel movements and the ambitions of the Byzantine emperor respectively), quickly developed into a reformed and enduring epigraphic-based coinage.

For the Church in Bilād al-Shām, the implications were ultimately catastrophic. Just as Constantine had cut out the pagan establishment from the financial benefits of monetary control almost four centuries earlier, the reform of the administration initiated by ʿAbd al-Malik, of which coinage was a part, locked out the Church from the collection of taxes. That duty it had performed since the time of the Sāsānid occupation, if not before, until the sweeping changes of the 690s, almost a century. The tax role of the church can be readily identified in the archaeological record, most famously with the informative *entagia* recovered from a church at Nessana/Naṣṭān in the Naqab/Negev,[29] but also in a number of churches, for instance at Arindela/Gharandal in south Jordan,[30] where rooms were deliberately built into the church fabric and in which storage jars have often been found during excavation. Probably, then, these store rooms were used to stockpile the wheat and oil requisitioned as tax at short notice, as seen in the *entagia*. At Jarash, taxes were perhaps collected at the Propylaea Church, where a mosaic inscription of 565 CE in a stoutly enclosed forecourt documents the existence of a *diakonikon*, where charitable contributions in kind and money were collected,[31] a role easily expanded into gathering tax in money and kind demanded collectively of the community. Yet this advantage was not to persist; hence the closing of the Nessana church archive at the end of the 7th century, even though occupation at the site continued long after (below). Likewise the seemingly volatile and irrational behaviour of St. Peter of Capitolias, archivist of the church treasury at Bayt Rās, who doggedly persevered with his self-martyrdom in 715 by blaspheming Islam.[32] Even at the time, then, the loss of the Church's economic primacy was recognized, directly or indirectly, as eventually crippling to the standing of both the clergy and the institution in the social and cultural life of towns and their hinterlands. Perhaps it was at this time of distraction, as the economic management of town and country by Church authorities was conveyed to an Umayyad administration, that some farmers – maybe out of necessity – absconded from the land due to inadequate support and supervision.[33] Absconding from farming, perhaps approaching flight from the land, was conceivably one of a number of factors that were to accelerate soil degradation and valley infilling, two interconnected factors thought to have occurred around this time.[34] Hence coinage, the economy, and social change were intimately interlocked.

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29 el-Abbadi 1994; Kraemer 1958.

30 Walmsley, Karsgaard, and Grey 1999; Walmsley and Ricklefs 1997.

31 Crowfoot 1931: 15–16; Crowfoot 1938: 227–9.

32 Hoyland 1997: 354–60; Lenzen and Knauf 1987; Peeters 1939.

33 Such as around Pella; see: Watson and O'Hea 1996.

34 Bintliff 2002; Butzer 2005; Vita-Finzi 1969.

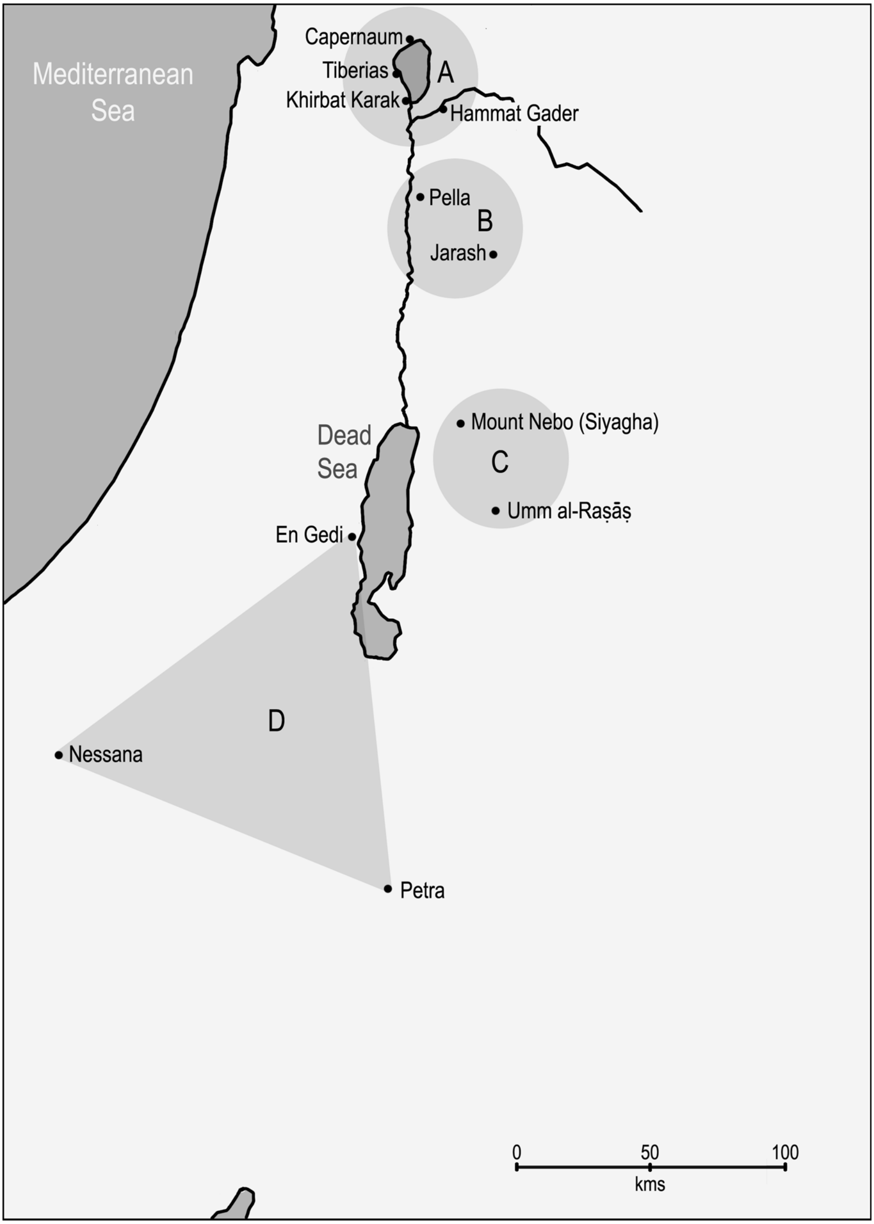


Figure 1.2 Clusters of sites in southern Bilād al-Shām with representative numismatic evidence from excavations. Source: author, 2008

Coin Distribution

The concluding segment of this paper returns to an analysis of the coins themselves, the intention being to assess the extent and penetration of a monetary economy in one area of 7th- and 8th-century Bilād al-Shām. The study utilizes casual finds and coin hoards from excavations, not unprovenanced hoards. Unfortunately, time and space currently do not allow a full treatment of this question, and the intention here is to focus on select examples that illustrate the state of the monetary economy in some areas of Bilād al-Shām at that time.

As it currently stands,[35] this study concentrates on a number of sites that have been subjected to a fair amount of archaeological investigation. Accordingly, it is assumed that the numismatic evidence is fairly representative for each of these sites. All are located in the south of the region, as listed below (Figure 1.2; archaeological names are used).

a. A cluster of sites around Lake Tiberias, specifically Tiberias, with coins from excavations in the town, a church and naturally heated baths at Hammat Tiberias;[36] other lakeside settlements at Capernaum and Khirbat al-Karak;[37] and the baths of Hammat Gadar on the lower Yarmūk River, also built around hot-water springs and refurbished under Muʿāwīya.[38]
b. Jarash and Pella (Fiḥl, Ṭabaqāt Faḥl), located east of the Jordan River.[39]
c. A Balqāʾ group, consisting of Mount Nebo and Umm al-Raṣāṣ (Kastron Mefaa).[40]
d. A southern group located in southern districts of *Palaestina*, represented by En Gedi by the Dead Sea,[41] and two sites further south, namely Petra (church) and Nessana/Naṣṭān.[42]

The *Tiberias cluster* has the advantage of comprising both urban and rural sites (Figure 1.2, cluster A). In general, the numismatic history of this group reveals that Tiberias/Ṭabarīya formed an economic 'hot-spot' throughout the period, especially the town, with a high incidence of Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid coins but also continuity into Fāṭimid times and, with the Berenike church, the Crusader period (Figure 1.3a).[43] This profile

35 This section is very much work in progress, with more data and analysis planned.

36 Town: Berman 2004; Mount Berenike church: Bijovsky 2004; Hammat Tiberias: Amitai-Preiss 2000.

37 Capernaum: Wilson 1989; Khirbat al-Karak: Delougaz and Haines 1960.

38 Amitai-Preiss and Berman 1997.

39 Pella: Sheedy, Carson and Walmsley 2001; Jarash: Bellinger, A.R., 1938; the only partial publication of the coins from Jarash's macellum excavations makes their use unsuitable.

40 Nebo: Gitler 1998; Saller 1941; Umm al-Raṣāṣ: Gitler 1994.

41 Hirschfeld 2007.

42 Petra: Betlyon 2001; Sokolov 2001; Nessana: Bellinger 1962; Goodwin 2005.

43 The charts depict base coin frequencies from excavations in the 6th to 9th centuries, shown as a percentage of coins attributed to these centuries within set chronological periods. The totals

agrees with other archaeological evidence, which has revealed a high level of activity in the town during the 8th century, including a rapid recovery after the 749 earthquake.[44] The reign of Hishām appears especially significant,[45] and may reflect the moment when Ṭabarīya was promoted to the role of capital of the Jund al-Urdunn. Thereafter, archaeology shows that Ṭabarīya continued as a flourishing ʿAbbāsid and Fāṭimid centre and, on Mount Berenike, offers evidence for an uninterrupted church history down to a Crusader refurbishment. However, after the Umayyad period and notably the 749 earthquake, the sites around Lake Tiberias – markedly Capernaum, Hammat Gadar and Khirbat Kerak – virtually disappear off the monetary horizon (Figure 1.3b). The excavators propose that the baths at Hammat Gadar were destroyed in the 749 catastrophe and never rebuilt,[46] but Jodi Magness' reanalysis of the stratigraphy and associated ceramics show a degree of continuing activity clearly greater than 'minor levels of occupation'.[47] Similarly Khirbat Kerak, an important Umayyad centre from the caliphate of Muʿāwīya,[48] was occupied into the ʿAbbāsid and, probably, Fāṭimid periods, as was the village of Capernaum. Yet the numismatic evidence shows that these sites had largely become disconnected from an active monetary economy, even though they were still occupied. At Khirbat Kerak and Capernaum especially, painted, glazed and incised ceramics speak of extensive occupation in the 9th to 11th centuries.

The *Jarash and Pella group* reveal a related but not identical numismatic history that accurately reflects the economic horizons of both sites.[49] These towns have a long numismatic history in the 6th to 8th centuries (Figure 1.4a), beginning with a very similar tradition during the 6th century in which coin supply peaked in the reign of Justin II before sharply falling off (Figure 1.4b, showing only the Byzantine coins). Thereafter the numismatic history of Jarash and Pella separate; Jarash returns to high levels of coin activity (similar to the Ṭabarīya area; compare Figure 1.4a Jarash two-period moving average with those of the sites around Ṭabarīya in Figure 1.3b), whereas Pella tapers off. These diverging trends are similarly reflected in the archaeological

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are adjusted to take into account the different length of each period. The only exception is Figure 4b, in which annual nummi values are used, a method only possible with Byzantine coinage. Chart lines depict a two period moving average for each excavation; this offers a more accurate portrayal of monetary circulation as coins remained available for at least fifty years after minting and often longer (Walmsley 1999), unless withdrawn from circulation (as with the pre-reform coinage, see comments in Walmsley f.c.-b for local examples).

44 Dothan and Johnson 2000; Hirschfeld 2004; Hirschfeld, Gutfeld, Khamis and Amir 2000; Stacey 2004.

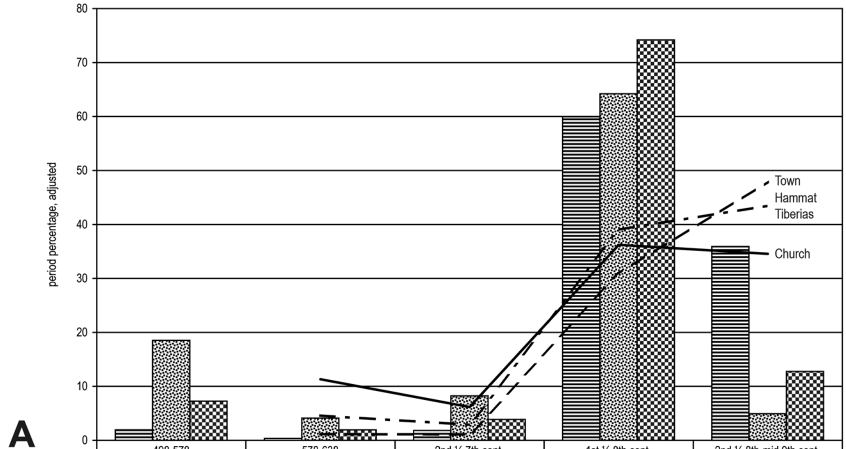
45 Berman 2004: 222, 'The frequent appearance of the date AH 116 (= 734/35 CE) apparently suggests some administrative and historical significance during Hisham's rule for that specific year'.

46 Hirschfeld 1997: 479.

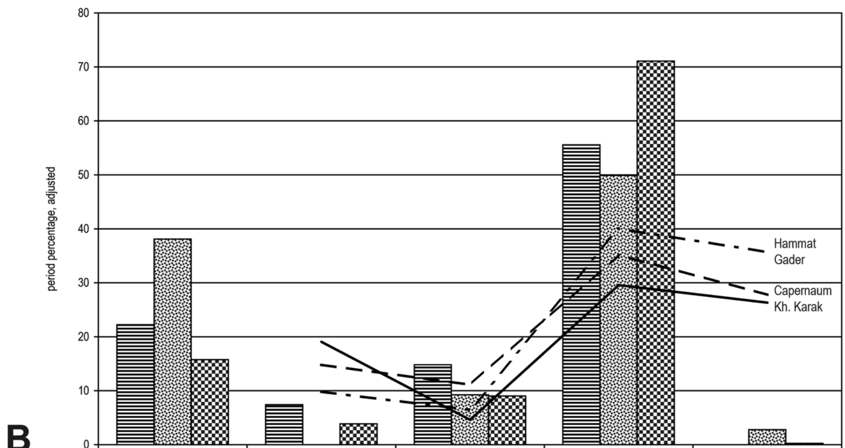
47 See J. Magness, this volume.

48 Whitcomb 2002.

49 See Walmsley 1999 on frequencies of Byzantine coinage recovered at Jarash and Pella, although with some dated observations.

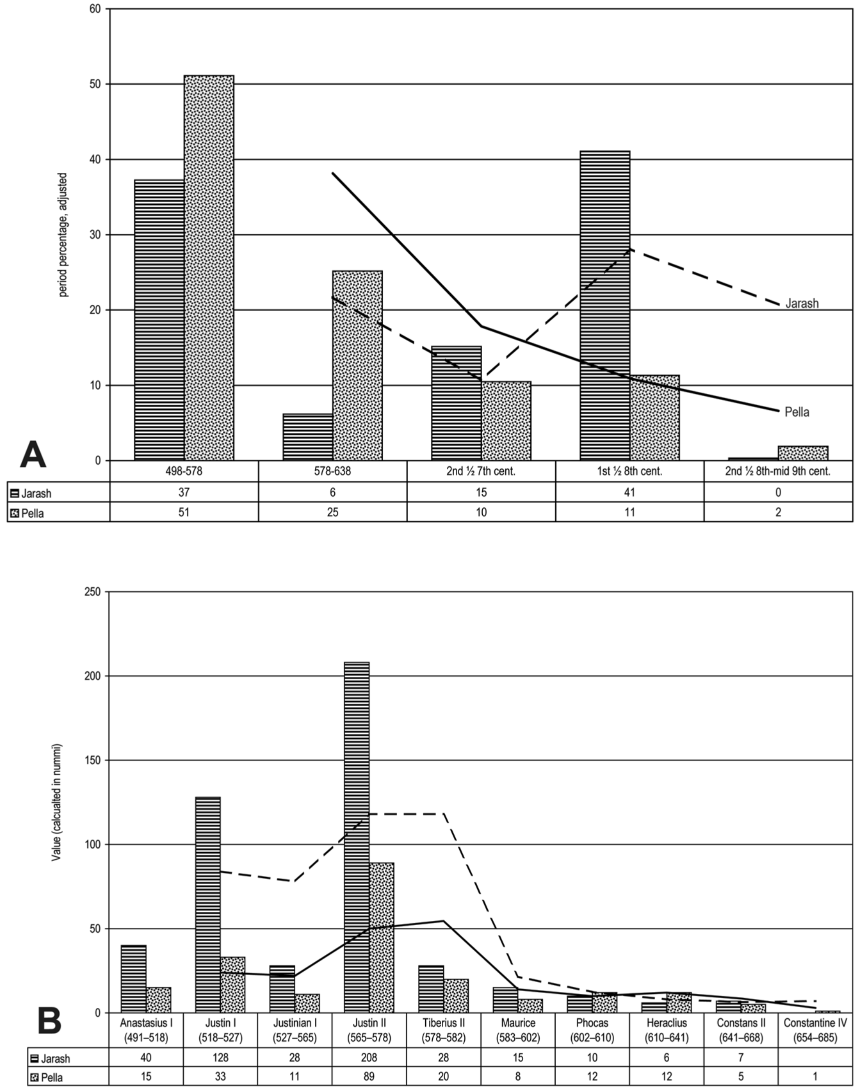


	498-578	578-638	2nd ½ 7th cent.	1st ½ 8th cent.	2nd ½ 8th-mid 9th cent.
Tabariyah, town	2	0	2	60	36
Tabariyah, church	19	4	8	64	5
Hammat Tiberias	7	2	4	74	13



	498-578	578-638	2nd ½ 7th cent.	1st ½ 8th cent.	2nd ½ 8th-mid 9th cent.
Capernaum	22	7	15	56	0
Khirbat al-Karak	38	0	9	50	3
Hammat Gader	16	4	9	71	0

Figure 1.3. Base coin frequencies from excavations by period, shown as a percentage of recovered coins and adjusted for period length; Ṭabarīyah group. a. metropolitan sites; b. hinterland sites. Source: author, 2008



	498-578	578-638	2nd ½ 7th cent.	1st ½ 8th cent.	2nd ½ 8th-mid 9th cent.
Jarash	37	6	15	41	0
Pella	51	25	10	11	2

	Anastasius I (491–518)	Justin I (518–527)	Justinian I (527–565)	Justin II (565–578)	Tiberius II (578–582)	Maurice (583–602)	Phocas (602–610)	Heraclius (610–641)	Constans II (641–668)	Constantine IV (654–685)
Jarash	40	128	28	208	28	15	10	6	7	
Pella	15	33	11	89	20	8	12	12	5	1

Figure 1.4 Base coin frequencies from excavations by period; Jarash – Pella group. a. Frequencies shown as a percentage of recovered coins and adjusted for period length. b. Byzantine period coin frequencies shown as face value in nummi, adjusted for reign length. Source: author, 2008

record; at Jarash recent excavations have revealed a large mosque, markets and other evidence for a high level of economic activity in the Marwānid period,[50] whereas at Pella the evidence suggests comparatively more subdued conditions, although not a complete absence of activity.[51] Specifically, excavation of mid-8th-century earthquake destruction deposits produced a high proportion of coins in precious metals: eleven *danānīr* and fifteen *darāhim,* suggesting sweeping generalizations on economic prosperity based solely on base coinage may be misleading. In the following ʿAbbāsid period, both sites experienced a significant falling off in coin availability. Although Jarash and especially Pella suffered considerably from the effects of the 749 earthquake, archaeological research has shown that occupation continued into ʿAbbāsid times at both places, in spite of the havoc inflicted on the urban infrastructure by this natural disaster. At Jarash, the sūq area and perhaps mosque were refurbished, whereas at Pella a new town centre overtly commercial in plan was constructed adjacent to the devastated town and, sometime in the 9th century, the ancient *tell* was reoccupied with continuity into Fāṭimid times. Yet this economic activity is only faintly reflected in the numismatic record.

A healthy numismatic history is evident with the *Balqāʾ group* (Figure 1.5a), located south of ʿAmmān in the district of Madābā. Every major period from the 6th to mid-8th century is represented in the coin record at the major pilgrimage site of Mount Nebo, but with an abrupt termination after a spike in the Marwānid period. At the village site of Umm al-Raṣāṣ(Kastron Mefaa), the Marwānid period is likewise well represented – this was the age in which the wondrous carpet of mosaic was laid in the renowned church of St. Stephen – but, unlike Mount Nebo, followed by significant ʿAbbāsid continuity. The numismatic continuity is substantiated by the archaeological evidence. The apse of St Stephen's church was, in the second half of the 8th century, refurbished with a new mosaic stylistically resembling those in the reception hall of Khirbat Mafjar, and the ceramic profile likewise shows considerable continuity of settlement into the 9th, 10th and perhaps 11th centuries.[52]

Mention should also be made of two small copper hoards of the mid-8th century, one from Mount Nebo and the other from Tall Jawa, near Madābā.[53] Both were found with textile adhering to the coins, which has been interpreted as the remains of a cloth bag in which the coins were stored, an attribute also known from a hoard found at Ghazza.[54] The Jawa hoard is of particular interest, for it shows the continued – although perhaps waning – role of copper coinage. The coins divide into two major categories: those attributable to a province by virtue of the inclusion of a mint name (65.5%) and, secondly, completely anonymous issues (34.5%). All the coins with a mint name came from regional mints in central and southern Bilād al-Shām, namely Damascus, Ḥimṣ,

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50 Barnes, Blanke, Damgaard, et al. 2006. Jarash is also known to have surrendered a number of unpublished dirham hoards.

51 Walmsley 1992.

52 Alliata 1994.

53 Gitler 1998; Walmsley f.c.-b. I would like to thank Michele Daviau for the opportunity to study the important hoard of post reform *fulūs* from Tall Jawa.

54 Qedar 1984–5.

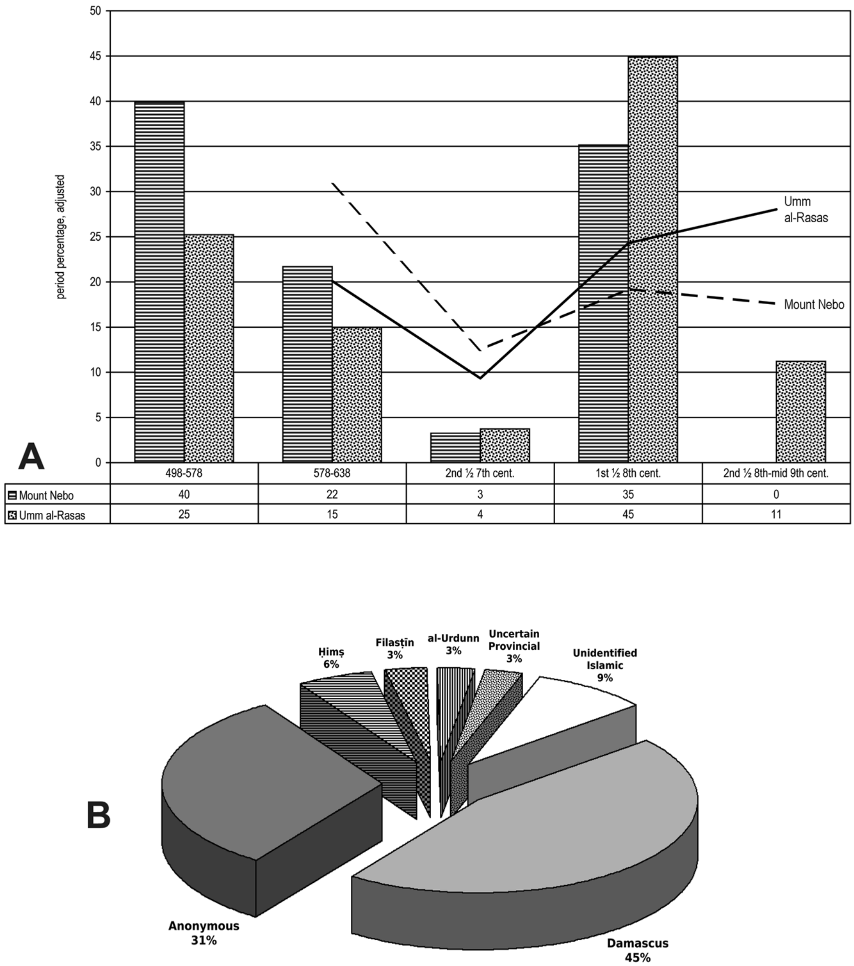


Figure 1.5 Base coin frequencies from excavations by period; Balqāʾ group. a. Frequencies shown as a percentage of recovered coins and adjusted for period length. b. Pie graph of coin frequencies of a mid-eighth century hoard of *fulūs* from Tall Jawa, near Madaba, Jordan. Source: author, 2008

Filasṭīn (al-Ramla) and Ṭabarīya (Figure 1.5b). The absence of coins from more distant mints, contrary to corpora of coins recovered from 8th-century contexts in Bilād al-Shām,[55] suggests that the hoard was compiled as a single event, a suggestion further supported by the fact that the Damascus mint was by far the major source of the Tall Jawa hoard.

Contrary to the previous examples, the Southern *Palaestina* group offers a quite different impression of the health of the monetary economy in the inland regions of south *Palaestina* (Figure 1.6). Overall, base coinage no longer features in the local economy by the 8th century, and the monetary revival of the first half of the 8th century so clearly seen further north did not extend to south reaches. At En Gedi/ʿAyn Jidī and Petra, the 6th century appears as the last moneyed century, with few finds after the 570s,[56] and with a preponderance of small denominations at Petra (due to need, or preference?) in the decades before. However, the chronological limits of the circulation history of those coins is uncertain; they may have continued as legal and preferred tender well into the 7th century. Sadly, other archaeological discoveries at both sites are unhelpful in understanding this question, as the nature of occupation at each site as revealed in the archaeological evidence can be argued. En Gedi, at least, has produced some 8th-century material from the village site, including early ʿAbbāsid pottery,[57] but contextually the implications of this material is not clear cut. The situation at Nessana is a little different, with a fall-off in the last quarter of the 6th century, a slight rise under Heraclius/Constans II,[58] but no 8th-century revival. Regrettably, publication of the Nessana coins is very confused and the figures are probably more unreliable than usual. Archaeologically, however, occupation can be attested at Nessana well into the 10th century, as demonstrated by Jodi Magness,[59] even though the excavators argued for an 8th-century abandonment, presumably based on the absence of papyri after around 690 and an end to a numismatic record with the Umayyads. Sadly, new excavations perpetuate these interpretative flaws, likewise arguing for 'a dramatic change' in the mid-eighth century.[60] Yet ceramics and glass ascribable to the 9th to 10th centuries are wrongly relegated to an imprecisely defined 8th century, thereby skewing crucial chronological parameters.[61] Hence, while 8th and even 10th century occupation is evident for inland southern Palestine, this is not reflected in the coin data, suggesting the presence of a demonetarized economy by that time.

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55 Such as from Pella; Walmsley 2001.

56 Phillips 2004: 19.

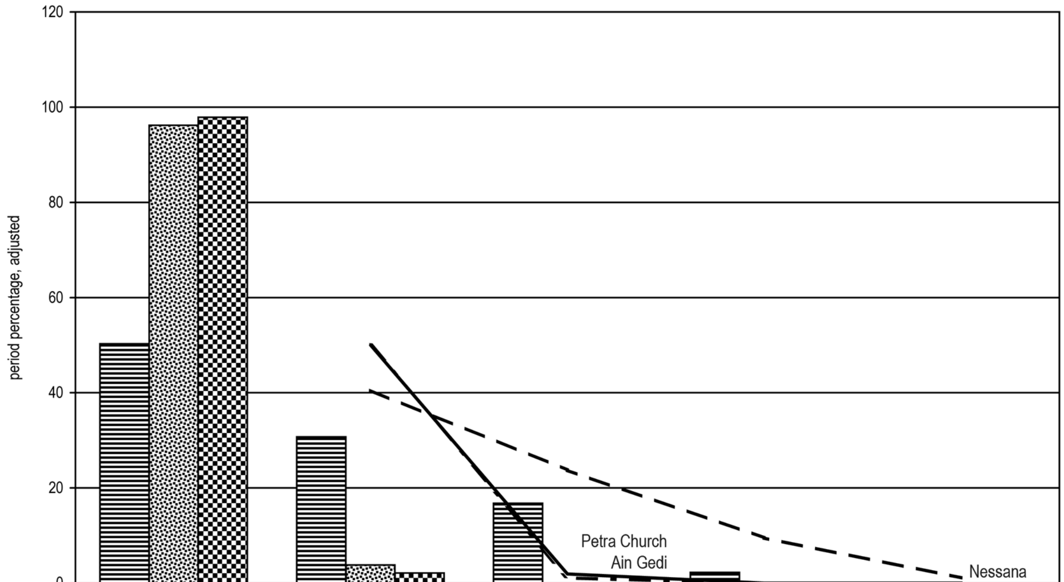
57 de Vincenz 2007; see the mention of ʿAbbāsid material on p. 260, but this pottery is not illustrated.

58 Comparable to a similar trend at Pella; see: Walmsley 1999.

59 Magness 2003: 180–85.

60 Urman 2004: 116.

61 Urman 2004: 37*–8* especially.



	498-578	578-638	2nd ½ 7th cent.	1st ½ 8th cent.	2nd ½ 8th-mid 9th cent.
Nessana	50	31	17	2	0
Ain Gedi	96	4	0	0	0
Petra church	98	2	0	0	0

Figure 1.6 Base coin frequencies from excavations by period; Southern *Palaestina* group. Frequencies shown as a percentage of recovered coins and adjusted for period length. Source: author, 2008

Discussion

In essence, three main monetary trends can be seen in the four areas studied.

1. Considerable *monetary continuity* at two quite unrelated sites: urban Ṭabarīya, including the Berenike church above the town, and at the steppe site of Umm al-Raṣāṣ.
2. *Monetary weakening,* steadily from the later 6th century at Pella, but somewhat later, after the mid-8th century, in the Ṭabarīya hinterland, Mount Nebo, and Jarash. The 749 earthquake, despite the devastation it wrought, can not be the sole cause for the end of a monetary economy in the region (as already noted, Ṭabarīya recovered to flourish in ʿAbbāsid times). Other explanations must be sought, especially as these sites show continuity in the archaeological record, such as, for Mount Nebo, a lessening of Christian pilgrimage and changes to the economic functions of monasteries. Explaining variable rates of prosperity and changing social and economic roles in urban and rural Bilād al-Shām during early Islamic times is one of the most challenging issues facing Islamic archaeology today.
3. *Demonetarization,* the earliest instance (by the 7th century) in the ʿAraba-Dead Sea and south Jordan region, but by the 8th century at Nessana. Archaeologically this area has posed numerous problems for the interpretation of site settlement, a situation resulting in part from the absence of comprehendible coin data, and these can not be resolved until further improvements in ceramic studies occur, necessarily independent of hitherto misleading coin determinations.[62]

Final Comments

The numismatic evidence recovered from archaeological excavations gives something of a mixed view of the monetary economy in 7th- and 8th-century Bilād al-Shām. While the value and hence importance of small change waned in the later 8th century, major centres still had a need for this unit of currency, as a continuing minting history also attests. However, there were fewer mints, and much less coinage circulating, in ʿAbbāsid times. Outside of the main towns the 7th and 8th centuries reveal an increasingly demonetarized economy, a development that occurred at differing rates over the region depending on a site's status and its geographical location.

Questionable, however, is whether a demonetarized economy was structurally frail and less resilient to shock. This is an important matter, as such reasoning can be proposed as an underlying factor in the supposed 'easy conquest' of Bilād al-Shām in the early 7th century. Zbigniew Fiema continues to argue for major economic decline at Petra and its

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[62] Important studies in Avner and Magness 1998; Avni 1996; Haiman 1995; Magness 2003; Magness 2004.

hinterland in the later 6th century,[63] but alternative explanations can also be sought in realigning and adaptive economic strategies by local communities as they came to rely increasingly upon their own abilities – intentionally, willingly, or not. It may not have been 'all beautiful', but many communities persevered and some did well for themselves. Evidence for what has been termed the 'ruralization' of the urban environment, such as at 8th-century Pella, must be offset against an excavated household from which two coin hoards totalling ten danānīr and occupants swathed in silk clothing were recovered. Likewise, the recent Nessana excavations have uncovered evidence for decorated silk textile in a house of the 8th (or later?) century.[64] Are we not observing continuing levels of wealth, but one sourced from and expressed within a different lifestyle?

The question of the usefulness, or appropriateness, of coins as a historical document has been raised before, but often ignored for the late antique–early Islamic transition in Bilād al-Shām. As always in archaeology, it is the totality of the archaeological evidence, and especially its reasoned analysis, that sheds light on social and economic conditions at any point in time, not the evidence from one site nor the presentation of one category of material culture.

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63 Fiema 2002.

64 Baginski and Sheffer 2004; Urman 2004:115*–16*.

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Chapter 2

Christian Communities in Early Islamic Syria and Northern Jazira: the Dynamics of Adaptation

R. Stephen Humphreys

In a recent book, I asserted that even though Muʿāwīya, both as governor and caliph, pursued a strikingly philo-Christian policy in many respects throughout his forty-year reign in Syria and the Jazīra, his regime still amounted to a process of slow starvation for the churches and monasteries in his domain.[1] These crucial institutions of Christian society were no longer the recipients of imperial benefactions, nor did they have access to public revenues. That meant that they would have to live off previous endowments (insofar as these had not been stripped away during the conquests and given to members of the new Arab-Muslim ruling elite) and occasional gifts from wealthy members of the community – inevitably a declining resource as conversion to Islam took hold in the 2nd/8th century. As Muʿāwīya's benign policy gave way to the more rigorous fiscal policy of the Marwānids, not to mention their strong assertion of Islamic identity and supremacy, these vulnerabilities could only increase, and they were doubly reinforced by the harsh fiscal and Islamization policies pursued by the early ʿAbbāsids. By the late 2nd/8th century, then, we would be looking at a Christian population which was still very large – a clear demographic majority in most parts of Syria and the Jazīra – but also one that was isolated from the centers of Christian life in Constantinople and the Byzantine heartland, politically marginalized, and facing a significant decline in both human and financial resources.

But a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; already many elements in this portrait seem doubtful or overdrawn. To begin with, the evidence of cultural and intellectual vitality among the Christian churches of the East throughout the early Islamic period, indeed well into the 5th/11th century and beyond, does not suggest stagnation and demoralization. That should be no surprise, in view of the critical role that Antioch, Palestine (especially the monastery of Mar Sabas), and Alexandria had played in the elaboration of Christian thought between the 4th and 7th centuries. We should not imagine that the churches of the East were isolated by the Arab-Muslim conquests; we might rather argue that Constantinople and Rome were now cut off from the intellectual and devotional energy that these centers had provided. Likewise, Christian theologians under Muslim rule were free to pursue their debates without concern for imperial favor

[1] Humphreys 2006.

or disfavor – or for that matter, fear of violence from rival sects. In any case, recent scholars have been impressed by the ingenuity and adaptability of Christian theologians as they strove to define their faith in terms that would be credible and persuasive in the face of Islam's radical monotheist challenge. Christian apologetic was surely intended not merely to rally the faithful, but also to demonstrate to Muslim rulers and polemicists that Christianity was fully monotheistic, and that even the doctrines of Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, if properly understood, did not contradict the Qur'ān when read closely.[2]

Likewise, the archaeological evidence from Palestine and central Syria indicates the ongoing occupation (and in some places prosperity) of Christian towns and settlements down to the 3rd/9th century, though the Ḥawrān, Balqā', and Jordan Valley apparently experienced a significant recession in urban life by the mid to late 2nd/8th century. The new mosque and government compound of Jerash seems to have been abandoned in 749 after a severe earthquake. Whether the town as a whole, including its several fine churches, suffered the same fate at that moment is a fair question, but Jerash was abandoned soon enough in any case. It was not alone; among other urban centers, Bostra (Buṣra) suffered the same fate, and Scythopolis (Baysān), though resettled, was never again more than a local market town.[3] It is fair to ask why such prominent and handsome cities were not simply rebuilt, as Syrian and Anatolian towns had often been after equally destructive events in Roman and early Byzantine times. One obvious (but surely insufficient) answer is that 749 coincided with the overthrow of the Umayyad caliphate and the transfer of Islam's center of gravity to Iraq; there simply was no reason to rebuild places that were in a sense living on borrowed time even before the 'Abbāsid seizure of power. If they had served a useful (albeit gradually declining) purpose in the Umayyad military-administrative system, they had little value for an 'Abbāsid Syria organized on very different lines.

Not everything was abandoned, however; many smaller substantial settlements continued on. The "proof text" for such continued occupation and relative prosperity would be the mosaic floor datable to 785 in St. Stephen's in Umm al-Raṣāṣ. There was clearly extensive damage to many mosaic floors in the churches of Transjordania (e.g., Mādabā, Mt. Nebo) during the middle years of the 2nd/8th century, but in my judgment this should be attributed not to abandonment or Muslim hostility, but rather to the Iconoclast controversy, which clearly raged as strongly in Syria as in Anatolia.[4] It is only the 3rd/9th century – in a dynamic that remains obscure and largely unstudied – that witnesses the wholesale abandonment of these sites and systematic bedouinization throughout Transjordania and many districts in Palestine.

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2 Grypeou 2006: see esp. contributions of G.J. Reinink, M. Swanson, D. Thomas; Marcuzzo 1986: 44–66; Griffith 1992.

3 Foss 1997: 244–5, 257; Tsafrir-Foerster 1997: 135–49; oral communication, Alan Walmsley. The broadest survey of the process remains Schick 1995: summarized 220–24.

4 Piccirillo 1992: 41–2; Schick 1995: 180–219. In the absence of decisive textual or archaeological evidence, both hesitate to identify those responsible for the defacement of these mosaics.

Ironically, it is an argument from silence, always a hazardous gambit, that might throw some light as to how Christian communities were faring. Damascus and Aleppo present an intriguing puzzle. Anyone who studies the urban topographies (Ibn ʿAsākir, ʿIzz al-Dīn ibn Shaddād, Ibn al-Shiḥna, Sibṭ ibn al-ʿAjamī, ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Nuʿaymī) composed for these cities between the late 6th/12th and early 10th/16th centuries will note an odd chronological gap. Both cities were, in a sense, claimed for Islam through the construction of their great congregational mosques under the Marwānids. But does that mean, as we often assume without thinking much about it, that they soon acquired a majority Muslim population, either through immigration or because the old Christian populations living there progressively adopted Islam? The evidence for that proposition is very tenuous. In fact, after the fall of the Umayyads, we find very few new monuments in either city that are specifically Islamic – e.g., major public edifices of religious character – until the establishment of Seljuk rule in the early 6th/12th century. Indeed, the ʿAbbāsids stripped the great mosque in Aleppo of its marble and mosaics in order to adorn a new mosque in al-Anbār in ʿIrāq. Sayf al-Dawla sponsored some important work in Aleppo in the mid-4th/10th century, but most of this, in particular a grand palace outside the walls, was secular in nature. Major repairs and reinforcements to the walls and citadel were required by Nicephorus Phocas' systematic destruction of the city in 952–53. There were only two significant Islamic additions to Aleppo between the fall of the Umayyads and the Seljuk era: Sayf al-Dawla's Mashhad al-Dakka, built to mark the burial place of al-Muḥassin ibn ʿAlī, and the beautiful 5th/11th-century minaret of Aleppo's great mosque, built not by the city's ruler but at the behest of the Shīʿite Qāḍi Ibn al-Khashshāb.[5]

Damascus escaped both `Abbāsid depredations and the destructiveness of the Byzantine wars in the 4th/10th century, but there was little if any new construction for several centuries after the fall of the Umayyads. Perhaps the city's vast Umayyad Mosque was enough even for a growing Muslim population (if indeed it did grow either in absolute or relative numbers.) Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 1176) names fourteen churches and one synagogue as included in the treaty putatively negotiated with Khālid b. al-Walīd in 635. In his own times most of these were in ruins or (in four cases) converted into mosques – only the synagogue and two churches were still active – but he provides no information on when and under what circumstances these changes came about.[6] In some cases it may have been fairly recent. Likewise, Ibn Shaddād (d. 1285) states that the Christians of Aleppo had some seventy sanctuaries (*haykal*) at the time of the conquest, including the Cathedral of St. Helena.[7] (The term *haykal* is hard to interpret with precision but could probably include any locale having an altar, whether or not it served as a regular place of worship.) Four of their major churches, including St. Helena's, were forcibly converted to mosques as a consequence of the Crusader siege of the city in 1125. How many were left to them we do not know, but in any case the Christian community seems

5 Ibn Shaddād 1953: 16, 19, 22–4, 29, 31–2, 33–4, 48-9; Ibn al-Shiḥna 1933: 22, 32, 37, 41, 55, 57, 62–5, 85–7.

6 Ibn ʿAsākir 1958: 220–25.

7 Ibn Shaddād 1953: 45; Ibn al-Shiḥna 1933: 82–4.

still to have been a substantial one at the beginning of the 6th/12th century. Altogether, it is reasonable to think that the Christians of Damascus and Aleppo retained both the buildings and institutions of communal life long past the end of Umayyad rule. Both Christians and Muslims in these two cities seem to have been living off their capital, for the physical infrastructure in place ca. 750 was little altered until the beginning of the 6th/12th century. Sketchy as it is, the information given in the urban topographies suggests (with all due reserve) that change in the religious demography of Aleppo and Damascus was a very slow process during the first four centuries of Muslim rule.

In general the Muslim Arabic chronicles and biographical compendia maintain a frustrating silence about the Christians of Syria and the Jazīra, though one can glean something by reading between the lines and looking for incidental bits of information. (Social history of this sort was not the purpose of these works, of course; they were concerned with the struggle for political power and the establishment of Muslim scholarly lineages.) Their silence is partially compensated for by the (admittedly late) testimony of the geographers Ibn Ḥawqal (d. 980) and al-Muqaddasī (d. 988), who allude, if only sporadically, to a strong Christian presence in North Syria and the Jazira. This was a crucial political issue in the late 4th/10th century, when these districts were dominated by Byzantine armies and many Muslims had fallen under Byzantine rule. Ibn Ḥawqal laments the disastrous fate of the Byzantine frontier under the Ḥamdānids, and fears (justifiably enough) that the Muslim populations that had fallen under Byzantine rule would soon be compelled or seduced into abandoning their faith for Christianity.[8] Al-Muqaddasī famously complains that his native Jerusalem was largely a Jewish and Christian town, and he identifies Edessa, with its magnificent church, as still predominantly Christian as well.[9]

Finally, and perhaps most telling, the Syriac chroniclers from the late 2nd/8th to mid 3rd/9th centuries (the anonymous Zuqnin chronicler, fl. ca. 775, and Dionysius of Tell-Mahré, d. 846) clearly indicate that the bishoprics and monasteries of the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn, and more broadly of Diyar Muḍar and Diyar Bakr, were fully functional under the early ʿAbbāsids, despite a series of natural disasters (flood, plague, famine) and destructive Kharijite raids in the 740s and early 750s. The Zuqnin Chronicler indeed stresses the great prosperity of the Jazīra ca. 770, before the brutal but relatively short-lived depredations of al-Manṣūr's last fiscal agent, Mūsā b. Muṣʿab (which afflicted Arab-Muslim landholders as severely as Syriac Christian communities) – so prosperous indeed that the bishops were free to indulge their internecine struggles for power and wealthy Christian landowners to sink into luxury, backbiting, and oppression of their tenants. Conversion to Islam comes as a single apocalyptic episode, not a long term process.[10] At that point, clearly, the ecclesiastical infrastructure of the northern Jazīra was still intact and still able to assert its authority and economic influence over the countryside.

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8 Ibn Ḥawqal 1938: 183–4, 188, 201, 209–10; Ibn Ḥawqal (Kramers-Wiet) 1964: I, 181–2, 185–6, 195, 203.

9 Muqaddasī 1906: 141, 167, 183; Muqaddasī (Miquel) 1963: 188, 224–5.

10 Zuqnin 1999: 165–6, 183–5, 192–204, 215–23, 321–30; Michael the Syrian 1924: II, 526–7.

Dionysius, writing two generations later, does fret about conversion among his flock – but perhaps more as a foreshadowing of things to come than as an immediate crisis. In any case, he also proclaimed that the Arab conquests had been "no small blessing," since they freed the Orthodox (i.e., the Syrian and Egyptian monophysite churches) from Roman tyranny and oppression. It is not impossible to reconcile these two statements, to be sure: in good Old Testament fashion, Dionysius wants his readers to see Arab-Muslim rule as being simultaneously a gift of Divine Providence and a test and temptation for the faithful.[11] In any case, it is clear that for him too, as late as the mid 3rd/9th century, the basic structures of Christian life in North Syria and the Jazīra remained in place.

Since the evidence for the institutions of Christian life, and the economic underpinnings of those institutions, is terribly scattered, it will be a long time before we can bring it all together. Even so, there is enough to show that the key elements of Christian communal life in Syria and the Jazīra – chiefly parish churches, bishoprics, and monasteries – not only survived the conquests but even continued to prosper (apart from the usual Divine chastisements of drought, famine, and pestilence) well past the end of Umayyad rule. The question before us here is the role played by these institutions within the economic processes of Christian communities during the first Islamic century and beyond. How were they affected by the rapid changes in the economy, demography, and social structure of Syria and the Jazīra under the Umayyads, beginning with the governorship of Muʿāwīya ca. 640? The answer is that we (or at least I) do not know. However, we can identify some of the problems that would be at the core of any analysis.

1. What was the impact of a rapid acceptance of Islam among the heretofore Christian Bedouin of the Syrian steppe? For that is the population, not villagers and townsmen, which first went over to the new religion. (The standard literature on this subject, by François Nau and Spencer Trimingham, is full of useful information, but is far from satisfactory, since it is apologetic in approach and – dreaded word – "orientalist" in the most invidious sense.)[12] Obviously Christianity did not disappear from the steppe all at once: Taghlib, much of Tanūkh, and some elements of Kalb held on to the old religion until long after the first century. But the Qays tribesmen settled in the north along the Byzantine frontier by Muʿāwīya and Yazīd were both Muslim and newcomers to Syria, while Judhām (southern Palestine and Transjordania) and most of Kalb (central Syria) went over to Islam readily if not always willingly.

A great deal more study is needed before we can determine just how and why this came about, let alone the ways in which it affected the other (sedentary) Christian communities of the region. A few variables are obvious enough. Walter Kaegi believes that at the beginning of the conquests the Byzantines could still draw on the political prestige and recruiting power of the Ghassānid confederation, however weakened and disaffected it had become since Maurice had cut off its subsidies in 582. As many as half the Byzantine troops at Yarmūk may have been Arab tribesmen recruited under Ghassānid aegis. But the disintegration of Ghassānid forces after Yarmūk and the abrupt

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11 Dionysius in Palmer 1993: 141.

12 Nau 1933; Trimingham 1979.

disappearance of Byzantine power in the Syro-Jazīran interior meant that Byzantine gold could no longer be used to subsidize the tribesmen.[13] Byzantine defeat also meant a loss of Byzantine prestige – and by implication a loss of prestige for the Byzantine religion, even in its dissident Jacobite or Nestorian forms. Inevitably they would seek new patrons – i.e., the Arab-Muslim governors of Palestine, Jordan, Damascus, and Ḥimṣ.

On another level, the religion which the conquerors brought from Arabia was distinctively an Arab religion; whatever else it may or may not have been in these first decades, it was unmistakably the badge of the new ruling class. The Arabs of Syria-Jazira who were not deeply attached to Christianity (as Tanūkh, Taghlib, and the Jafnid ruling clan among the Ghassānids clearly were) would presumably have found the Arabism – a deliberately vague word – of Islam appealing. Moreover, even during the conquest period, and more systematically under the Marwānids, there was clearly a great deal of pressure on the Syrian Arab tribesmen who had joined in the conquests (Tanūkh, Taghlib, Quḍāʿa-Kalb, Judhām) to come over to Islam.[14] On what other basis could they possibly be registered on the payroll of a professedly Islamic regime – or not be relegated to the mass of tax and tribute-paying subjects?

What then was the impact on the sedentary Christian communities of this pastoral-nomadic defection to Islam? Here we can only speculate. In the districts east of the Euphrates (Diyār Muḍar and Diyār Bakr), the impact was likely minimal, all the more as the established northern tribes, Tanūkh and Taghlib, remained largely Christian well beyond the chronological limits of this volume. Chase Robinson argues that the people of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn had only sporadic contact with the Muslim authorities until the fiscal innovations of al-Walīd.[15] Even though the Zuqnin Chronicle indicates that Muslim landholders started appearing in this area during later Marwānid and early ʿAbbāsid times, we do not know just who they were. Presumably they were Arab notables, of various tribal origins, whom the Marwānid and ʿAbbāsid regimes wished to reward or reconcile. In any case, they do not seem to have dispossessed either Christian peasants or institutions of their lands.[16] That does not mean that life was peaceful and secure; the Ṭūr ʿAbdīn was a frontier zone, and its inhabitants constantly had to endure the violence of the wars against Byzantium and Armenia. But they and their churches and monasteries did endure, and the region remained overwhelmingly Christian long after the period discussed in this paper.

Settlement patterns in North Syria are not well known. The once-great cities of Antioch and Apamea had suffered terribly from earthquakes and the Persian Wars in the 6th century, and both were still in very bad condition when the Arab armies arrived. Antioch served the newcomers as a forward military base on the Byzantine frontier but was never the focus of serious urban development. Apamea was to all intents and purposes abandoned. The smaller cities of Beroea (Aleppo) and Epiphania (Ḥamā) had survived the rigors of the 6th century fairly well, and both were graced with major mosques under

13 Kaegi 1992: 52–5,112–14, 136, 171–3, 248–9.

14 Nau 1933; Donner 1981: 98–111.

15 Robinson 2001: 44–50.

16 Zuqnin 1999: 164ff.; Cahen 1954.

the Marwānids – in Ḥamā's case (but not Aleppo's) at the expense of its cathedral.[17] To some degree these mosques stood as victory monuments proclaiming the triumph of the new religion, but presumably they were also intended to serve the needs of substantial Muslim garrisons. However, the major Umayyad administrative center for North Syria and the Byzantine frontier was Emesa (Ḥimṣ), with Chalcis (Qinnasrīn) as a northern outpost. One would therefore expect Ḥimṣ to possess the largest Muslim settlement in this region, but since the texts are largely silent and the contemporary city retains no trace of the early Islamic period, we cannot really know. The villages of the great limestone massif between Aleppo and Apamea, though declining in population and prosperity, remained solidly Christian; archaeological evidence for any Muslim settlement there is exiguous at best. Only the town of Maʿarrat al-Nuʿmān, at the foot of the southern edge of the limestone massif, may have been developed as a locale specifically earmarked for Muslim settlement, though even this is a bit speculative.[18]

In Palestine and Jordan the impact of Arab conversion to Islam was likely much greater. The pastoralists here had long been woven into the fabric of settled society – it is no accident that the Roman provinces in the Negev and east of the Jordan had for many centuries been called Arabia. The work of Sidney Griffith in particular has shown how rapidly – by the late 2nd/8th century – Palestinian Christian communities became Arabophone.[19] Pastoralist-sedentary relations were always tense, however symbiotic we like to think they were, but as long as the tribesmen were under Roman surveillance and were Christian there was a tolerable balance. Once the villagers' Bedouin neighbors had become Muslim, however, there must have been a shift in the dynamics of the relationship. Almost inevitably there would be increased pressure on the lucrative properties of churches and monasteries; if they were not seized outright, either surreptitiously or under cover of law, pressure could be applied to divert their revenues to satisfy tribal demands. As we know from the Nessana and Khirbat al-Mird papyri, some tribesmen were settled in or assigned to specific districts as small garrisons. Apart from such official initiatives, there was always a push-and-pull as sedentary, semi-sedentarized, and nomadic groups moved from one mode of life to another; as tribesmen became villagers, they would presumably remain Muslim and thus alter the confessional profile of the population. The real Islamization and bedouinization of Palestine began later on, I think, in the 3rd/9th century, but the seeds of these changes were sown in the decades immediately following the first conquests.

Since archaeology for this period is only in its infancy, or early adolescence at best, the evidence for Muslim settlement patterns is uncertain and hard to interpret. There were of course a few new planned towns, such as Ramla and ʿAnjar, along with elaborate steppe projects like Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, and these were entirely Muslim. In the long-established cities of this area – Jerusalem, Scythopolis (Baysān), Jerash, and Boṣrā – the record is inconsistent. Jerusalem acquired a mosque, traditionally built at the command of ʿUmar, very soon after the Muslim occupation, and on the Temple esplanade no less.

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[17] Foss 1997: 231; Ibn Shaddād 1953: 30; Ibn al-Shiḥna 1933: 56–7.

[18] Foss 1997: 236.

[19] Griffith 1992; Griffith 1997.

But it was an unimpressive, even ramshackle affair until this area was transformed under ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd. The primitive mosque at Jerusalem demonstrates the claiming of an intensely sacred (albeit derelict) space for Islam, but it says nothing about the size or character of the Muslim community in that city.[20] As for Scythopolis, there is good evidence for Arab (presumably Muslim) settlement there in the decades after the conquest, but so far at least no trace of a mosque has been found within the city.[21] Jerash has revealed a small but carefully designed and well-constructed mosque in the very heart of the city, large enough for the district governor, his officials, and perhaps a modest garrison; it is laid out on the typical Syrian basilical pattern and seems to date from the reign of Hishām (724–43).[22] Boṣrā, finally, has a very substantial mosque on the main north-south thoroughfare (still in use though of course much altered over the centuries). Presumably Boṣrā was a key administrative center and perhaps mustering-point for the tribal warriors of this region, who were such a core element of the Umayyad army. It is very important to note that none of these mosques displaced the existing churches of these cities; the religion of the newcomers took its place alongside that of the indigenous inhabitants.[23]

2. Occasional sequestrations and confiscations of church property and its reassignment to Muslim notables surely occurred in the first Islamic century, even if they were not common. Major churches were only occasionally affected; the incorporation of St. John the Baptist in the great mosque of Damascus, and Epiphania/Ḥamā, is quite exceptional in early Islamic and Marwānid times at least. Such things did occur, however. Abū Yūsuf tells us that ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz (717–20) reversed sequestrations that dated back to even to the rather philo-Christian Muʿāwiya, on the grounds that existing churches, monasteries, and their lands were guaranteed by the pacts made during the conquests. Antoine Fattal gives a broad sampling of incidents (most postdating the 1st/7th century of course), drawing on Michael the Syrian as well as Muslim writers.[24]

Such events meant that rents and dues would no longer go to the bishops, churches, and monasteries, but to Muslim landlords. It also meant that Christian tenants had to deal directly with Muslim superiors, and that their own religious leaders would have much less leverage in helping them. If you were dealing with an oppressive lay landlord or even a bishop, you might plead your case to an especially revered monk or stylite, in the hope that he could use his status or spiritual powers on your behalf. Barring divine thunderbolts (which do occur in our sources from time to time), such intercession with a Muslim landlord or fiscal agent would almost inevitably be much less effective.

3. A relatively rigorous fiscal policy was instituted by the Marwānids, though it is not easy to determine just how this was applied to the properties of churches and monasteries.[25] In general, as taxation policy was worked out and acquired normative

20 Humphreys 2006: 128–9; Johns 2003: 423.

21 Tsafrir-Foerster 1997: 136–9.

22 Alan Walmsley, personal communication.

23 Foss 1997: 241–4.

24 Abu Yusuf 1921: 228; Fattal 1958: 178–94.

25 Dionysius in Palmer 1993: 201–4, 208; Michael the Syrian 1924: II, 488–90; Robinson 2001: 44–7, 50–53.

status in Islamic *fiqh*, monks (or at least mendicants) were not supposed to be subject to a personal capitation tax (*jizya*), but that exemption did not apply to taxes on property.[26] Under Byzantine rule, monasteries had paid some taxes to the state except where immunity had been specifically awarded. Under Muslim rule, we should probably assume that there would be no immunities – not at least after a stable tax system was developed. Likewise, at a certain point, bishops were forbidden to collect certain public revenues which had been allocated to them under Byzantine rule.

4. The famous prohibition against new churches and monasteries is recorded by Abū Yūsuf (d. 795), who dates it back to the first conquests in Syria under Abū Bakr and ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭab. He does seem to permit repairs that do not enlarge these buildings, however.[27] In any case, such repairs and at least interior enhancements were undertaken regularly in early Islamic times and even much later, as the beautiful 10th-century frescoes at the small church in Qana (Syria) demonstrate. Muʿāwiya is supposed to have funded the rebuilding of the great church of Edessa after it had been damaged in an earthquake in 679, and Hishām likewise permitted such acts even if he did not pay for them.[28] In cities and rural districts that remained overwhelmingly Christian, of course, a prohibition against new edifices could hardly be enforced even if the authorities wished to do so. We need not accept Abū Yūsuf's attribution of this prohibition to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, but the sentiment that Christian institutions should be fixed within their existing limits seems quite an early one, even if it became normative doctrine only in the later 2nd/8th century. It could be argued that Syria and the Jazīra were so full of churches and monasteries at the time of the conquests that new ones were hardly necessary. Many of these churches might even be regarded as vanity projects for their wealthy patrons rather than institutions that met a real need for corporate worship. On the other hand, populations would inevitably move around over time; in principle if not always in practice, churches abandoned in this process could not be replaced – all of this quite apart from sporadic confiscations and forcible conversions.

Related to this is the contentious matter of crosses – a crucial symbol of the faith for Christians, and the thing that Muslims found even more offensive than icons.[29] The cross was a complex symbol. It was theologically offensive because it represented the physical reality of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. It was politically offensive because it was one of the key symbols of Byzantine power and victory – the True Cross, restored to Jerusalem by Heraclius in 630, as well as the image engraved on the Byzantine *nomisma* and pointed to by Byzantine apologists as a sign of imperial triumph in the face of adversity.[30] Just when the display of crosses became an openly contested issue is not so clear. Dionysius of Tell-Mahré tells us that one of the first Muslim governors in Syria decreed that all crosses must be removed from public places, and the Jews of Damascus gleefully set about destroying

[26] Fattal 1958: 270–73.

[27] Abū Yūsuf 1921: 213–30

[28] Dionysius in Palmer 1993: 195

[29] King, G. 1985; I wish to thank Prof. Averil Cameron for this reference.

[30] Kaegi 1992: 223–7.

them until warned off.[31] The governor's name is given as ʿAmr ibn Saʿd, presumably the same person as ʿUmayr ibn Saʿd al-Awsī al-Anṣarī, who is often mentioned in Ṭabarī and elsewhere as governor of Damascus under Abū ʿUbayda, and then of Ḥimṣ and Qinnasrīn, before all Syria was brought under Muʿāwiya's authority in ʿUthmān's second year. Apart from his name, however (which identifies him as one of the very few Medinese Anṣār to be given a military command and governorship during the conquests), the Muslim texts say very little about his activities. If these events really happened – and I see no reason to dismiss the story out of hand, since ʿUmayr was hardly a prestigious figure whose real or fictitious acts would be used by later jurists to establish binding precedents – they were isolated and sporadic rather than part of any settled policy. Muʿāwiya, always concerned to reconcile the Christians of his realm to Arab-Muslim rule, certainly authorized no such initiatives in his forty-year rule, and it is really under Yazīd II (720–24) that this issue (this time more reliably attested) again burst onto the scene.

What does all this add up to? Our evidence is a mixed bag of broad tolerance and incidents of oppression, of enduring (even prospering) Christian communities alongside Muslim settlement and conversion to Islam. For the first century and a half of Muslim rule, at least, I believe it reveals a situation of pressure and reduced circumstances, but hardly one of slow starvation or systematic persecution. As long as monasteries and bishops retained their revenue-producing lands and could collect rents from their tenants, and as long as there were wealthy Christians who would devote some portion of their own wealth and estates to the church, the old system could go on indefinitely. Certainly by the end of the Umayyad period (coinciding more or less with the death of St. John of Damascus) there was no reason to think it would not do so. The early ʿAbbāsids made life quite a bit harder than had the Marwānids, but the churches had flourished in political environments far more hostile than those of al-Manṣūr's last years or the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Only in the 3rd/9th century did there begin to be real cause for concern.

The underlying process which drove the change from a condition of stasis to one of progressive (if still gradual and uneven) erosion has yet to be explained in any convincing way. Such hypotheses as we have are impressionistic, and based more on scattered anecdotes than a systematic sifting of the evidence. At the risk of floating yet one more hypothesis of this sort, I will return to a point mentioned in passing at the beginning of this paper. The core dynamic at work, I would suggest, was an increasing flow of converts among well-born and wealthy Christians. In the 7th and early 8th century this was merely a trickle, but in time – certainly by the 3rd/9th century – the trickle grew into a steady stream. Aristocratic or at least prominent families had been a crucial source of both financial support and leadership for churches and monasteries even under Roman rule. After the Arab-Muslim conquests such families continued to provide many of the bishops and heads of monasteries, and they were now the only source of new funding.[32] In the new order of things, however, such aristocratic families faced a serious problem;

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31 Dionysius in Palmer 1992: 169–71.

32 Dionysius in Palmer 1993: 201–4; Robinson 2001: 54–9, 90–108; Brenk 2004: 451–5, 472–3.

they had derived much of their social status and wealth through service in the Byzantine imperial bureaucracy, and Islamic rule inevitably limited such possibilities.[33] By the mid-700s, men of this background could expect no better than clerical or (as we would say) mid-level managerial roles in the government. As Islamic rule grew more solidly established and ideologically conscious, the pressures and incentives to convert became harder and harder to resist. Of course we should not exaggerate. Recall that at the end of the 4th/10th century, the geographer al-Muqaddasī commented that Muslim rulers in Syria and Egypt preferred Christian to Muslim secretaries, since the former, in contrast to their Muslim counterparts, at least took the trouble to compose letters and decrees in correct Arabic. Three centuries later, in Ayyūbid and even early Mamlūk times, the sultans could occasionally still recruit senior officials from among Christians, Jews, and even Samaritans. But such figures were by then very rare.

As the scions of notable Christian families adopted Islam, they would take their wealth and prestige with them, and in this way the economic and social foundations of Christian life would crumble bit by bit. Moreover, the conversion of elite Christians would undermine the morale of villagers and ordinary townspeople and their commitment to the old religion, not to mention their willingness to bear up under the fiscal disabilities and social marginalization increasingly imposed by Islamic regimes. Regrettably, we know very little about elite conversion to Islam, certainly in Syria and the Jazīra, and it will be very difficult to find enough data to test or develop this hypothesis in any rigorous way.[34] Nevertheless, it may suggest a useful line of inquiry to be pursued in the years ahead.

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33 Banaji 2001: 134–70; Sarris 2006: 155–9, 181–99.

34 Bulliet 1979: 104–13.

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Chapter 3

Administering the Early Islamic Empire: Insights from the Papyri

Arietta Papaconstantinou

> The Arabs, a people of relatively primitive organisation and with no experience of empire, naturally took over much of the machinery of government which they found in the more advanced provinces which they conquered.

These words were written in 1928 by Sir Harold Bell, editor and translator of the Greek part of the most voluminous bilingual dossier of administrative documents from Umayyad Egypt, that of the pagarch of Aphrodito Basilios under the Arab governor Qurra ibn Sharīk (705–15). Today, after eighty years of new finds, new historical approaches and improved knowledge of the period, we have come a long way from Bell's line of reasoning – or have we? In all fairness, beyond the lip-service paid to the evolutionary theories prevailing in his time, Bell was the first to pose the problem of the administration of the early Islamic empire in terms that still largely dominate the question today. He continued:

> The new evidence of papyri has shown us in what wholesale measure they borrowed from Byzantium. It shows also with what judgement they modified these borrowings so as to avoid at least the obvious faults of the old system.[1]

Since Bell's day some exciting new texts have been published, and a growing number of scholars have become interested in them.[2] There has been, in the work of the last decades, a shift that is not always explicit towards a historiographical model more in tune with post-colonialism, that gives the "barbarian" Arabs much greater dignity and respect and sheds terms such as "primitive" and "advanced". These have been replaced by no less loaded contemporary terminology, such as "Muslim managerial vision and central planning", an expression that in itself shows how much the outlook has changed from the first steps in the field.[3] It is to be found in one of the two recent surveys of the

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1 Bell 1928: 279.

2 See for instance Morimoto 1981; Gascou 1983; Christides 1991; Morelli 2001; Khan 2007; Hussein 1982, as well as the numerous short studies by Nikolaos Gonis. More generally, the interest for the subject manifested through such volumes as Sijpesteijn and Sundelin 2004; Sijpesteijn et al. (2006).

3 Sijpesteijn 2007a: 447.

documentary evidence by Petra Sijpesteijn, surveys that take into account all the work that has been done since Bell and give a very nuanced picture of early Arab rule in Egypt, also introducing a number of new questions such as Islamisation, Arabicisation, or the symbolic forms of power used by the Muslims.[4]

Yet despite the updated theoretical framework used in recent work on the subject, the questions asked of the documents have remained essentially the same, centred on the themes of continuity and innovation, what the Arabs kept and what they changed. Although the actual areas where changes can be observed are the same as those identified by Bell, contrary to him more recent scholars have generally tended to give those changes a more preponderant place than to the "continuities". The importance afforded by scholars today to the "innovations" brought by the Arabs is, I believe, a function of the fact that "the Arabs" were also "the Muslims", and that the Arab conquests were the starting point of what was to become the Islamic empire. The interchangeability of the terms "Arabs" and "Muslims" in most of the literature indicates that strong statements in favour of the novelty and especially the precocity of Arab concepts of imperial power actually conflate two different questions: on the one hand the administrative consequences of the conquest, and on the other its religious scope and impact. The latter in turn is linked to the recurring debate over the chronology of the "birth" of Islam as a distinctive religion, and whether there was a "Muslim" consciousness and policy as early as the conquests and the establishment of the Arab empire.

The poll tax is where these questions intersect, which is why so much of the work has focused on its introduction and evolution. It is understood as "a religiously motivated tax which acted as a bright line of demarcation between rulers and ruled, Arab Muslims and non-Muslims and even converts. In other words, the logic and motivation behind the introduction of this tax are specifically Muslim".[5] In what follows I shall reconsider and discuss the mainly documentary evidence that is used to make a number of claims about the early Islamic state, focusing on the period between the conquest and the end of the second civil war, and offering some suggestions for a new approach of the subject that would take into account recent trends in the history of taxation systems.

In 9th-century Arabic taxation treatises, the *jizya* is indeed clearly identified as the tax to be paid by the non-Muslims as a sign of their submission, and more specifically by the "People of the Book" in return for their protected status.[6] This, however, is a product of the rationalisation and Islamisation of the tax system under the Abbasids.[7] This definition is based on the verse of the *Sūrat al-Tauba* that admonishes the believers to obtain tribute from non-believers (Q IX 29), the final part of which is far from unproblematic as the literature devoted to it shows:[8]

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4 Sijpesteijn 2007a; Sijpesteijn 2007b.

5 Sijpesteijn 2007b: 192; see also Gascou 1983: 103, 'détérioration du statut civil des Égyptiens'.

6 See the overviews in Cahen 1965; Heck 2004.

7 An overview of Muslim sources on the subject can be found in Heck 2004.

8 Transl. in Rosenthal 1953: 68–9, with the final passage left untranslated (*al-jizyata ʿan yadin wa-hum ṣāghirūn*). The discussion has centred on the translation of *ʿan yadin*, see Rubin

> Fight those who do not believe in God and in the Last Day, and who do not consider forbidden what God and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not take as their religious norm the true religious norm, of those who have been given the Book, until they give the tribute (*al-jizya*) readily, and have been humbled.

Obtaining tribute from a population was what one usually did after any conquest, and even though this specific conquest was religiously motivated, "fight them ... until they give the tribute" does not need to be forced into meaning more than "until they are conquered and submit".[9] I shall not delve into the unanswerable question of whether this particular passage of the Qur'ān was already in general circulation, in this form, in the 640s and 650s, although it obviously deserves to be asked and has some bearing upon the debate. That the *jizya* was initially seen as a tribute paid by the defeated is indicated by a short passage in the *Maronite Chronicle*, a fragmentary work probably written a little before the 680s.[10]

> When Mu'āwīya had acquired the power which he had aimed at and was at rest from the wars of his people, he broke the peace settlement with the Romans and refused to accept peace from them any longer. Rather he said, "If the Romans want peace, let them surrender their weapons, and pay the tax/tribute".

Another passage from the *Chronicle* suggests that until the later part of the 7th century the two aspects that are usually seen as defining the poll tax in later times, namely its systematic levy as capitation on adult men, and its role as tribute in exchange of protected status, were in fact separate, and the latter at least was applied *ad hoc* and had no systematic nature.[11]

> In the year of the Greeks 970 [659 CE], the 17th year of Constans, on a Friday in June, at the second hour, there was a violent earthquake in Palestine, and many places collapsed. In the same month the bishops of the Jacobites, Theodore and Sabūkht, came to Damascus and held an inquiry into the Faith with the Maronites in the presence of Mu'āwiya. When the Jacobites were defeated, Mu'āwiya ordered them to pay 20,000 *denarii* and commanded them to be silent. Thus there arose the custom that the Jacobite bishops should pay that sum of gold every year to Mu'āwiya, so that he would not withdraw his protection and let them be persecuted by the members of the

2006 with further literature.

9 See already Cahen 1965.

10 Introduced and translated in Palmer, Brock and Hoyland 1993: 29–35 (this passage 32); see also Hoyland 1997: 135–9 (partial transl. of the passage p. 136). Palmer dates the text to the 680s arguing that since the Chronicle is both Maronite and pro-Byzantine, it must date from before the Sixth Ecumenical Council, where the two were in disagreement; the accuracy with which weekdays are given also speaks for a date of composition very close to the events; Hoyland 1997 leaves the date open. The term in Syriac is *gzītā*, probably deforming *jizya*.

11 Palmer, Brock and Hoyland 1993: 30.

> Church. The person called "patriarch" by the Jacobites fixed the financial burden that all the convents of monks and nuns should contribute each year towards the payment in gold and he did the same with all the adherents of his faith. He bequeathed his estate to Muʿāwiya, so that out of fear of that man all the Jacobites would be obedient to him.

Thus the tribute to be paid by the Jacobites is the result of a deal between them and the caliph in exchange for protection against persecution by the Maronites. The implication is clearly that the Maronites did not pay that tribute, and that its rationale was not the imposition of a religiously motivated tax or protection tribute on all non-Muslims, nor even on all groups that later went under the name of "protected peoples", but the negotiation of state protection against a rival group – incidentally, one whose loyalties were with a rival state. It is very probable that the two forms of payment were conflated as the tax was generalised and theorised in later tradition, the "protected status" coming to justify the levy of a tax specific to those who benefitted from that status.

In Greek documents, the poll tax usually goes by the name of *diagraphon*, or more rarely the less ambiguous *andrismos* (or *epikephalaion* in the documents from Nessana). On the question of its introduction to Egypt, much has been made of one recently edited document from the Vienna collection, a letter from the *illustris* Athanasios in the Hermopolite to the *notarios* Senouthios.[12]

> + Seeing that, according to the orders of the most glorious *amīr* it has been decided that the *andrismos* for Hermoupolis be demanded and I was worried that they may be scared and run away, here, I have made this rescript and have sent it to you. Give the order to all the localities in your district and to the villages to the effect that whomever they find, be he a merchant of the Sarapaeum, be he a peasant, whether he be travelling south or north, they arrest him and bring him to me. This surveillance you shall apply from the river to the desert, and to the crossing points so that no-one can run away from your district and that you should not be in danger. Here, I have written this for you above + Issued on Pharmouthi 8, at the .. hour +
>
> *Verso*: + Give to Senouthios, *notarios*, + on the part of Athanasios, *illustris* +

In what is presented as a *minimal* interpretation, this text is claimed to testify to "a *new* religious poll-tax to be paid by all non-Muslim subjects".[13] When one looks more closely, however, none of this really follows unambiguously from the text. According to the editor, the fear that people will "run away" shows that the *andrismos* was a newly introduced tax. Yet the habit of running away to escape from tax was well-established in Egypt from Hellenistic times at least (it is even the original meaning of the term *anachōrēsis* made famous by the ascetic movement), and its mention here does not

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[12] *CPR* XXII 1 (Hermopolis, mid-7th c.), my translation.

[13] Sijpesteijn 2007b: 192 (emphasis in the original), repeating the arguments of Morelli 2001: 20.

necessarily imply a new tax – it could, for instance, indicate an irregular supplementary tax. If one takes the wording of the passage literally, one understands it as referring to a tax not levied regularly, but requested that specific year. Furthermore, the document only concerns Hermoupolis and the villages of its territory. Once again, it does not follow that such demands were sent to every single locality in the country: irregular levy could also have meant the *andrismos* was demanded in some localities and not in others in a given year. The designation of potential tax-payers in this document is all-inclusive ("whomever they find"), and the two examples given are "a merchant of the Serapeion" and "a peasant". Nothing in the document even remotely indicates this was a *religious* tax, or that it was targeted specifically at non-Muslims, let alone "*all* non-Muslim subjects".

Federico Morelli who edited this document has argued that it is "di poco posteriore alla conquista", for two main reasons. He considers the *amiras* metioned to be an Arab general like in the series of documents from the conquest years,[14] which would put this document in the same series. However, *amīr* was used very commonly to describe Arab officials well into the 8th century, both in Greek and Coptic documents, and can in no way serve to date a document earlier rather than later. Morelli's more compelling reason to date this document so early is that the *illustris* Athanasios, pagarch of the Hermopolite, can be shown to have acted in Byzantine times and also under the Arabs, so that the odd 50–60 texts from his archive that he is currently putting together are generally dated in the 630s and 640s, though rarely with a secure date. These reasons allow for some flexibility in the dating, which could easily be extended into the 650s. Further north, for instance, the *defensor civitatis* of Arsinoe in the Fayyūm, also an Athanasios, lasted from before the conquest until at least 653.[15] And this is assuming that we are dealing with the same Athanasios in all those Hermopolite documents, which given the frequency of the name can be questioned. Certainly the probability that two pagarchs of the same name, both bearing the title *illustris*, should have followed each other at Hermoupolis is very small, but it does mean that this document cannot stand as proof beyond doubt that the *andrismos* was introduced very few years after the conquest.

Also from Hermoupolis, and in a way the pendant of Athanasios's letter mentioning the *andrismos* and asking for control of the inhabitants, is a document containing two census declarations in Coptic registering males over 14 years in the village of Tjinela in the Hermopolite. These are written on the lower part of the verso of a papyrus broken off at the top, and containing on its recto a list of names in Greek each corresponding to a sum of 1/3 *nomisma* in a facing column. Between the two Coptic texts, a line in Greek reads, "Summary of the contributors (?) of the village of Senila for 32 1/3 solidi".[16] Editing the Coptic part of the text, Walter Crum presented the content of the Greek as if it were part of the same document, and was followed in this by Jean Gascou, who sees in

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[14] Published in Grohmann 1975.

[15] In a forthcoming study based on a paper given at the University of California at Berkeley, Ruey-Lin Chang has put together the dossier of that individual.

[16] *P.Lond.Copt.* 1079; the Greek part is edited and the Coptic translated in MacCoull 1994, with a picture of the papyrus pl. VII.

the list of names the census list mentioned in the Coptic text below.[17] Leslie MacCoull, however, edited the Greek text and argued that it was different from the Coptic, which was written later but independently on the same papyrus, basing her argument on the name of the tax mentioned on the recto, the *chrysargyron*, a Roman tax on trades and crafts unknown in the Arab period – and certainly not requiring a census of males over 14 years. It is not easy to decide this matter, which is not without importance. Here is the text of the census declarations:

> + I, Philotheos the head-man, son of the late Houri, the man from Tjinela, swear by God Almighty and the well-being of ʿAmr not to have left out any man in our whole village from fourteen years (up), but to have accounted for him to your lordship.
>
> + I, Ioustos, the village scribe, swear by God Almighty and the well-being of ʿAmr not to have left out any man in our whole village but to have accounted for him to your lordship +
>
> + I, Philotheos, together with Esaias, the head-men, and together with Apater the priest, the men from the village of Tjinela, we write, swearing by the name of God and the well-being of ʿAmr not to have left out any man in our village from fourteen years on; if you produce any that we have left behind we will put them in our house.
>
> + Sign +++ of Philotheos the protokometes, he agrees. Sign +++of Esaias, he agrees.
>
> + Apater, the humble priest, I agree.

Men over 14 were those who were liable for the poll tax in Roman times, a disposition that seems to have been taken over here. However, 14 marked the boys' coming of age more generally in Roman law, for example it was the age at which they were allowed to marry.[18] The suggestion has been made that this census could also have been made in view of the recruitment of forced labour, which would invalidate this document too as secure evidence of the poll tax.[19] This is where the relation of the Greek and the Coptic texts is important. If they are part of the same document, the census certainly refers to the levy of a capitation; but if the Coptic is self-standing, it could potentially have served some other purpose, such as *corvée* recruitment. The final declaration that anyone omitted from the list "we will put in our own house" indicates that a household with more members had a heavier burden. This was certainly true of the poll tax, but it could also have been true of the *corvées* about the repartition of which we know next to nothing, but which must also have respected some principle of equity.

17 Gascou 1983: 102.

18 See Prinzing (2009).

19 Hoyland 2006: 402, n. 35.

As for the date of the document, it lies in one of the two mandates of ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ as governor of Egypt, the first from the conquest to 645 and the second from 658 until his death in 663 or 664. There is no sign that could favour one rather than the other.

Andrismos clearly describes a tax on men, and thus a form of poll tax. Unfortunately the date of the Athanasios text is uncertain, even though it is so within a timespan that remains quite small. Other early attestations are more securely dated, but use terms that are more ambiguous, such as *diagraphon* and *jizya*. 8th-century documents usually distinguish clearly between land tax and poll tax, calling the former *dēmosion (gēs)* and the latter *diagraphon* – but, like *kharaj* and *jizya*, they could have taken on these meanings only gradually. In the earliest bilingual documents, *jizya* corresponds to *dēmosion*, which simply meant "public tax", while *diagraphon* initially meant "supplementary tax".[20] Despite the huge number of attestations of the term, especially in tax receipts, and secondarily in *entagia* (tax demands), few of these are securely dated, and among those, some date from the 6th century. The rate and scope of the tax is not always crystal clear from the content of those documents, and much of what has been said about them rests on several assumptions that make for a slightly circular argument: that *diagraphon* from 641 onwards means the capitation introduced by the Arabs; that there was no capitation in the 6th and early 7th century; that therefore, all the undated documents that mention *diagraphon* date from the Arab period; and that those that mention it and are securely dated in the Byzantine period refer to something else. A systematic reconsideration of this evidence for the 6th and 7th centuries is an absolute necessity before we can come to any firm conclusions on the subject. The difficulty in dealing with the question is demonstrated by the survey made by Ivo Poll of all the documents mentioning *diagraphon*, which remains very inconclusive as to its meaning and application.[21]

The earliest dated occurrence of *diagraphon* is a demand addressed to the village of Phys for 17 solidi and 12¾ carats for the payment of the tax (*diagraphon*) of the 11th indiction, which was issued on 14 Jan 653.[22] This date is based on the arbitrary identification of Kaeis, the *amīr* of the Heracleopolite named in the document, with Qays ibn al-Ḥārith, one of ʿAmr's generals on whom very little is known except that he participated in the expedition to Middle Egypt. Conceivably the document could be dated one indictional cycle later, in 668 – but even 653 is not "immediately" after the conquest. Furthermore, as this is a collective levy, it tells us nothing about the rate and distribution of the tax.

The earliest documentary occurrence of *jizya* is a fragmentary Arabic text on hide dated AH 44 (664/5), which records a payment of the *jizya* in dinars. A photograph, but

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20 *Kharāj* in fact only appears in the papyri in under the Abbasids, while *jizya* seems until that time to be a general term for 'tax'; see Frantz-Murphy 2006; Khan 2007: 42–4; Gascou 1983: 102.

21 Poll 1999; see also the remarks in Hoyland 2006: 402 and n. 35.

22 SB VIII 6756 = PERF 565; the document actually has *diak( )* with an abbreviation, read by Grohmann 1975: 31 as *diakonia*, but corrected in Gascou 1983 to *diak(raphon)* on the basis of a series of other texts that make this very common phonetic mistake.

without transcription is published by Yusuf Raghib in an article on the earliest Arabic papyri.[23] Once again, we can make very little of the form and scope of the tax paid.

Four documents from the Palestinian village of Nessana mention the *epikephalaion*, the equivalent of the Egyptian *andrismos* and a literal translation of *capitatio*.[24] These documents bear no absolute date, but some indicate the indictional year, and their editors have assigned them all to the years 685–90, partly for prosopographical reasons and partly on the basis of the assumption that they must be the result of ʿAbd al-Malik's reforms. However, there is no compelling reason why several of them could not be earlier, dating from the last years of Muʿāwiya or the early 680s. There is indeed much in the above evidence that could point to Muʿāwiya as being behind the first efforts at an organised levy of the poll tax. For Nessana, it is almost inevitable that this should have been introduced before ʿAbd al-Malik, even if we accept the 685 dating of some of the documents – a census took more than a couple of days to organise. In Egypt, the census of adult men is organised precicely by ʿAmr, sent to Egypt for a second mandate in 658 by Muʿāwiya to secure the province for him. The Arabic document on hide mentioning the *jizya* also dates from his time. This resonates with the statement in the *Maronite Chronicle* that "when he consolidated his power" among his people, Muʿāwiya took on the Romans and demanded the tribute from them.

This is very circumstantial and uncertain evidence, and it is impossible to conclude whether or not the poll tax was "introduced" at one specific moment and applied systematically thereafter to the entire country, and even less when that moment might have been. One cannot substantiate the claim that it was introduced practically with the campaigning armies, but it is also clear that forms of it existed before ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walīd, contrary to what has sometimes been suggested.[25] The process of systematisation was indeed under way in their time, but it did not happen overnight, and only assumed its generally described form under the Abbasids.[26] On the other hand, however sparse, the evidence on the 7th-century implementation of the poll tax, as well as the more abundant 8th-century documentation, cannot be used to show that this tax had religious value.

Even though the poll tax is seen as the watershed innovation, the one that gave the imperial vision of the Arabs its Muslim flavour, the existence of such a vision from the first years of their rule is usually also argued on the basis of a number of other "Arab innovations". I should perhaps say from the start that my purpose in what follows is not to come back to a paradigm according to which the conquerors had no administrative capacities and all they could do was keep up the good work of the Romans. On the contrary, it has been made abundantly clear that the Arabs (and others?) who conquered the Near East were capable of administering an empire, presumably in great part because many of them had previously lived in the Roman and Sasanian empires, or in the South Arabian kingdoms, and those who had not had been in constant interaction with those states.

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23 Raghib 1996: 14, fig. 3.

24 These are *P.Ness*. 59, 70, 76 and 77; see Hoyland 2006: 399–400 for the caveats concerning the dating of those documents and a critique of the shortcuts in the editors' argumentation.

25 As in Johns 2003: 421–3; see Hoyland 2006: 400–401.

26 See Frantz-Murphy 2006; Hoyland 1997: 339–40.

The point I wish to make is rather that we should not make more of this administrative capacity than what the contemporary documents allow for, and that we should take a step back and realise that what the Arabs set up was a very classic form of administration of conquered territories, centred on the extraction of resources that allowed both the maintenance and management of the state and its further expansion, and that made the best possible use of the existing structures. This, for example, was how both the Romans and the Ottomans proceeded, but also conquerors from much less cognate civilisations, such as the Chimú in thirteenth-century Peru, to take but one example, about whom we are told that "the reorganization of the Jequetepeque Valley after the Chimú conquest represented the imposition of an extractive enterprise designed to increase the flow of tribute and labor service to the Chimú capital".[27]

Evidently the new conquerors also wanted to mark their power and authority, to "make their presence felt,"[28] as did all their predecessors. Compared to the trappings of power set up by the Ptolemies and the Romans, however, the Arab way of doing this was decidedly very low-key. And compared to the brutality with which Roman power was re-asserted after the recovery of Egypt from the Persians, which left long-lasting traumatisms among the local population, it is very questionable whether the attitude of the Arabs at their arrival had such a powerful effect. Arguably, if the Arabs did have a deliberate policy on this matter, it was to make themselves as little felt as possible, so as to mark their contrast with Heraclius and come across as much more consensual. They could not have been unaware of the acute conflicts that had torn apart the Roman empire over the preceding century, and especially over the decades leading up to the conquest, and adopting a policy of appeasement after the conquest was their best bet for being accepted by the population.

This is very well illustrated by a number of documents that have come down to us from the conquest years. The majority are receipts for requisitions of goods for the conquering army, mostly written in Greek. Among them is a bilingual document from Herakleopolis that is also the earliest dated Arabic papyrus (25 April 643), and famous on this account.[29]

> + In the name of God! I, ʿAbd Allāh the *amīr* to you, Christophoros and Theodorakios, pagarchs of Herakleopolis. I received from you for the expenses of the Saracens who are with me in Herakleopolis 65 sheep, that is sixty-five and no more, and as an acknowledgement I made out the present receipt. Written by me Iōannēs the scribe and deacon, in the month of Pharmouthi the 30th of the first indiction.
>
> *In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate! Here is what ʿAbd Allāh ibn Jābir, and his companions, took as of animals for slaughter from Ihnas. We took from the representative of Theodorakios, the younger son of Abū Qir, and from the representative*

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27 Keatinge and Conrad 1983: 255 (in the abstract).

28 Sijpesteijn 2007a: 446; see also 2007b: 194.

29 *SB* VI 9576 = *PERF* 558; the translation of the Arabic is in italics. A colour reproduction can be found at http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Papyri/PERF558.html.

> *of Christophoros, the elder son of Abū Qir, fifty sheep from the animals for slaughter and fifteen other sheep, which were butchered for the men on his ships, his cavalry and his infantry in the month of Jumādā the first in the year twenty-two.*
> *Written by Ibn Ḥadīd.*
>
> Verso: + Receipt for the sheep given to the *Magaritai* (*muhājirūn*) and others who arrived, as a down-payment for the taxes of the first indiction.

This document is very interesting on several accounts, and I will come back to it again later. What I want to point out here is the passage on the verso, which is written in Greek, and shows that we are not dealing with an outright requisition, nor with a new tax, but with an advance on the year's taxes. This was a very common procedure for the provision of a campaigning army in the Roman empire, known as *coemptio/synōnē*. It involved the requisition of necessary items in kind, in principle reimbursed to the taxpayer according to market prices in the form of tax-credit, and when it exceeded the tax, in gold coins. Often understood as a form of compulsory purchase, it seems to have been the locus of much abuse, especially by defining the prices much lower than the market. It was regulated by the legislation of Anastasius who limited it to the supply of troops on his authorisation only, except in Thrace where tax revenue was too low to support the army. This was repeated in the Codex Iustinianus, while abuse seems to have continued, unsurprisingly.[30]

It is very fortunate that a papyrus has survived documenting this procedure on the side of the Roman army, also during the Arab conquest. It dates from 639/40, and is also from the Fayyūm.[31]

> ... of the divine ... crowned by God ... ... To Flavius Theodorakios the most magnificent pagarch of this city of the Arsinoites, those from the village of Kamina of the Arsinoite nome, through us the priests ... Anoup the priest ... also a priest, and Phib the priest, son of Pousi, also a priest, and John ... and Elias son of Neilammon and ... son of Sarapion and Ptolemaios son of Papnouthios and Gerontios son of ... son of Aunēs and Plō son of Sarapion and Phoibammon son of Victor and Nephera son of Chileos and Pamoutions son of Menas and Akōous son of Paul the priest, and Phib son of John, who were present and wrote on their behalf and on the behalf of those of their village who are not present, greetings. We declare with sound judgement and bear oath to God Almighty and to the imperial salvation that we have received and have been paid by your magnificence the price of what we gave on the part of the public authorities of our aforementioned village in various requisitions that were made on order of our master Kyros, the very holy and God-honoured pope, during this thirteenth indiction,

30 CJ 10.27.1 and 10.27.2.5–10; abuses of *coemptio*: Procopius, *Secret History* 23.11–14; see Zuckerman 2004: 178 for further references.

31 P.Lond. I 113 10 (p. 222) = W.Chr. 8. After this article had been finished and submitted, Federico Morelli argued in a conference (Vienna, March 2009) that this papyrus also emanates from the Arab authorities, a hypothesis I cannot discuss here.

> we mean the leathers (*byrsaria*) and the wools and the hay and the sheep and the sheepskins, the wild olives and the radishes and the coverings [or horse-trappings: *strōmata*]. That is, for the price of one leather item eight carats, for the price of twenty litres of wild olives twenty-five carats, … for the price of thirty-one bundles of hay one *nomisma* and eleven-and-a-half carats, and for the price of the sheep …

Contrary to accusations made by Procopius in the *Secret History*, the prices mentioned here do not seem to be outrageously out of line with what one might expect at the time, even though this is not very easy to verify.[32] This document also shows that a direct payment could be made in the place of tax credit, which is in line with Justinian's ruling that those who owe no tax, or are forced to sell for a sum higher than their share of tax should be paid in coins.[33] This is also shown by some other documents from the conquest period, such as an order in Greek from the same ʿAbd Allāh addressed to Kosmas, administrator of Herakleopolis on 29 Nov 643:[34]

> Keep yourself ready to buy for Iezit, son of Saraēl, from the tribe of …, clover for the price of fourteen solidi and one artaba of bread per month for the maintenance of four attendants.

These documents also show that regular annual taxes were levied by the Arabs immediately after the conquest, since tax credit could be given on them. It has been argued that as early as 643, ʿAmr had introduced a new administrative unit, the *chōrion*, for the levy of taxes.[35] The earliest known Arabic tax-demand, requesting one and a half dinars for the year's taxes, intriguingly also dates from the same year (AH 22/643 CE).[36] It is indeed quite plausible that the annual taxes had been neglected during the conquest years, and were reinstated and reorganised in the first year of Arab rule in the country.

There is another form of requisition that has been almost universally seen as the sign of Arab oppression of the conquered populations, and this is the system of *corvées*

[32] Cheynet and Morrisson 2002: 837–8, where wild olives even seem more expensive than oil, which is surprising, but does not speak for under-pricing of forced sale items by the army. Unfortunately the papyrus does not preserve the price of sheep, for which there are many points of comparison.

[33] CJ 10.27.2.6.

[34] *SB* VIII 9753 = PERF 561.

[35] This was argued by Ruey-Lin Chang and Jean Gascou in a paper presented at the 2006 conference of the International Society of Arabic Papyrology in Alexandria, on the basis of a reinterpretation of *SB* XX 14443. This is a demand addressed by ʿAmr to the pagarch of Heracleopolis for the payment of *dapanē* to an Arab. In a forthcoming paper, Ruey-Lin Chang, who is studying an archive of unpublished papyri relating to ʿAmr, argues that *dapanē* was the term used for *coemptio* in Egyptian documents of the seventh century. I am very grateful to him for showing me a draft of this paper, presented in 2005 at the University of California at Berkeley.

[36] This is P. Berol. inv. 15002, reproduced in Grohmann 1966, pl. II 2; a colour reproduction at http://www.islamic-awareness.org/History/Islam/Papyri/PBerol.html.

put into place to man the Arab fleet under Muʿāwiya. The archive of Papas from Edfu/Apollinopolis contains several texts dating from either 660/61 or 675/76 related to boat construction in Babylon, which make it clear that at least part of the workers were there on *corvée*, recruited from various parts of Egypt and controlled by a sophisticated apparatus. One document records that when a number of carpenters working at the shipyard in Babylon took flight, the *amīr* wrote to the duke, who wrote to all the pagarchs of the Thebaid asking whether there were any "foreign" (not registered in the pagarchy) workers hiding in their district – evidently assuming that the pagarchs had the means to control this. The document in question is the copy received by the pagarch of Apollinopolis.[37] One might quite safely assume that such an apparatus was not solely put into place to make boats for the governor's promenades on the Nile, and that it was related to the creation of the Arab fleet that the literary tradition consistently attributes to Muʿāwiya even before his accession, at the occasion of the battle of Phoenix in 554.[38] Many more, and more varied documents concerning requisitions of men survive in the early 8th-century archive of documents from the governorship of Qurra ibn Sharīk, recording the recruitment of *corvée* workers both for the shipyards at Klysma and Babylon, and for the construction works (mosques and palaces) in Fusṭāṭ, Damascus and Jerusalem under al-Walīd.[39]

For the 7th century the evidence is scanty, but what we do have concerns the war effort and not building activity. Once again, the extent to which such drafting of men would have had a stronger effect on the population than Roman army conscription is impossible to assess. In the Roman empire, conscription was so strongly resented that men would cut off one or two of their fingers to avoid it. Emperors reacted in various ways to this practice, and in 381, Theodosius promulgated a law to fight this form of desertion, punishing those who presented themselves with amputated fingers by tatooing them in the manner of cattle and slaves, and drafting them all the same. That this was not simply empty imperial rhetoric is demonstrated by a 4th-century papyrus containing a petition by a self-mutilated recruit who requested the intervention of the local anchorite.[40]

Another example of the initial tendency of Arab administration to remain relatively inconspicuous has to do with language and documentary tradition. At the time of the conquest the Arabs produced official documents in Arabic or Arabic and Greek. The bilingual document quoted above shows that these were drawn up in a tradition similar to the Roman one, inspired by the notion of contract, surety and mutual guarantee, yet showing also some marked technical differences with the Roman tradition. In particular, the Arabic part of the document is much more precise. First, it gives a breakdown of the sheep provided into two different categories, which could be explained by the fact that this only had any meaning for the Muslims and that the Christians did not need this information. However, the Arabic also notes that the goods are received from the *representatives* of the pagarchs, while the Greek does not. In terms of procedure,

37 P.Apoll. 9 ; for the date, see Gascou and Worp 1982: 88.

38 The evidence is conveniently put together in Zuckerman 2005: 114ff.

39 For the latter, see the overview given by Morelli 1998.

40 Zuckerman 1995: 183–7.

this is quite important, and it makes one wonder how common this unacknowledged devolution was in Roman documents. We also learn that the two pagarchs were brothers, and even their order of birth and the name of their father, which the Greek omits.

This early use of Arabic is once again seen as a form of symbolic assertion of the Arabs in the conquered areas. But given the precocious existence of this quite developed and very precise documentary practice, and the fact that Arab administrators occupied high positions at a very early stage, it is very striking that it was not put into general use from the start, and that the local documentary tradition was allowed to prevail. Despite some early examples, documents in Arabic only become common in the 8th century, after the reforms introducing Arabs to the lower echelons of the administration and Arabic as the official language of the chancellery.[41] This can only partly be explained as the natural result of having kept the local administrators in place. If, as has been argued,[42] Arabic was a way to mark their authority, which I believe it indeed was, the fact that it was not used more frequently alongside Greek in the early decades is significant as yet another sign of low-key assertion. The same holds true for the fact that the elements of Arab documentary tradition discernable in the 643 bilingual document were not subsequently imposed on the administration, which could have been done even though the documents were written in Greek. However, the Greek documentary tradition was left to evolve in its own manner, and was in no way influenced by the Arabic tradition.[43]

In administering their empire, the Arabs clearly used the same tool-box as the Romans, even if they changed some elements to suit their needs. Such reforms were common, however, and did not necessariy "signify" conquest or change of rule and religion to the population. Administrative reorganisation such as redistribution of provinces had taken place several times under Roman rule, and in some cases, like under Diocletian, at a much greater scale than under the Arabs. The creation of new infrastructures and rehabilitation of old ones was also an ongoing process, and the ones set up by the Arabs should be seen in the long term as part of this process. The same applies to the system of supply for Fusṭāṭ that was put into place throughout the country: seen from a wider perspective, all it did was replace the earlier system of supply for Constantinople, itself the successor of Rome as beneficiary of Egypt's fertility.

The *corvée* documents and the unified script and documentary tradition, together with a papyrus documenting the existence of a postal station in the Fayyūm that catered for an Arab courrier,[44] are commonly used as signs of centralisation[45] that can counter the usual dogma that the Islamic "polity" (not yet "state") before ʿAbd al-Malik was "decentralised" or even "a loose confederation of Arab tribes".[46] To a point this a false

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41 References to the rather poorly documented reforms in Sijpesteijn 2007a: 450.

42 Sijpesteijn 2007a: 446–7.

43 See Sijpesteijn 2007b: 193–4.

44 *P. Merton* II 100.

45 See for ex. Sijpesteijn 2007a: 445–8; this is also argued by Foss 2002 on the basis of a number of coins that he identifies as issued by Muʿāwiya.

46 Johns 2003: 418; cf. the scepticism of Donner 1986: 294 about the Egyptian evidence (which echoes that of specialists of the Roman period, e.g. Bell 1948: 23): 'Even if we come across

debate, since it tends to confuse decentralisation with lack of central authority, while a decentralised political entity is precisely one where devolution of authority is coupled with a number of strong centralising institutions that will hold the whole together, controlling especially such crucial issues as communication and resources, and to some extent, labour. Thus showing that Muʿāwiya's state was decentralised does not mean it had no central authority, nor that it had no central structure; conversely, showing that there was a centralised postal service and resource management does not necessarily entail that the polity as a whole had an entirely centralised structure. The argument that only a centralised state with "rationalised" and systematic institutions can be "strong", or even deserve the name of "state", is to adopt a view in which the post-revolutionary Napoleonic French nation-state provides the model against which all others are to be measured – a subject that itself has raised enormous debates among modern historians.[47] Evidently during the conquests and civil wars the Arab state was still in formation, but the very fact that it did succeed in holding together despite the civil wars and the immensity of its territory speaks for itself concerning the existence of a centripetal tendency powered by a centre that was certainly quite powerful, if only, at times, symbolically.

These are all matters on which it is very difficult to draw firm conclusions, because, as can be seen from the various documents above, the evidence is sparse and unclear, and has usually been seen through the lens of a sea of later accounts that have left on it deposits hindering its straightforward comprehension. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is like trying to understand pre- and post-Louis XIV administrative history through a handful of erratically distributed, disparate, ambiguous, fragmentary and undated documents, combining them with accounts of *ancien régime* administration written under Napoleon or Charles X. We are often warned not to generalise conclusions reached on Egyptian evidence to the whole empire (be it Roman or Islamic),[48] but much less so about generalising on Egypt itself on the basis of a single document.

From the 8th century onwards, the situation changes dramatically, essentially because of the so-called Aphrodito-archive, which is made up of the correspondence of the local pagarch, Basileios, with the Arab governor in Fusṭāṭ, Qurra ibn Sharīk, and with local administrators who presented him with various cases. It is on this very bulky archive that Bell and others have based most of their conclusions on how the Umayyads administered the country, and their observations are indeed valid for the Marwānids, but can hardly be applied to the preceding period. This archive is still virtually unstudied, however, except for some studies focused on specific points.[49] A thorough examination

documents from, let us say, Egypt during the reign of ʿUmar, we are entitled to ask whether such documents imply that ʿUmar (i.e. the central government) had a bureaucracy, or only his governor in Egypt.' See the discussion of this debate on centralisation in Hoyland 2006: 398–403.

47 See for instance the volumes published by the Franco-British project on 'The Genesis of the Modern State', funded by the European Science Foundation.

48 See for instance Bell 1948: 23; and Donner 1986: 294.

49 Bell 1928, as well as his introduction to the publication in *P.Lond*. IV remain the only comprehensive studies of the archive; Cadell 1968 presented and classified the texts known at

of its contents would be immensely useful for the understanding of provincial and local administration under al-Walīd.

It is impossible to even attempt this in the scope of this article, which is voluntarily centred on the 7th century alone. What makes this archive and other 8th-century documents very interesting is not only their potential for the description of the late Umayyad "fiscal system". Their abundance could allow us to analyse aspects of Arab taxation that have been neglected in the ultimately very descriptive debates about it, and to integrate insights and historiographical trends from the fiscal history of the much better documented medieval and early modern West. In particular, it has been repeatedly argued that fiscal systems should be analysed as forms of transaction rather than of one-way state imposition, in other words that they are not static entities imposed from above and applied mechanically and systematically by a network of officials who are faceless and will-less, but that from the top down and from the bottom up, the reality of taxation involved a series of negotiations that took into account several factors, ranging from individual social strategies to local culture and politics, and from the micro-level to that of the central authority. It can be clearly shown that local officials (i.e. local élites) would often turn the system to their advantage, not necessarily through oppressing the population to please the prince, but often by obtaining privileges for their city, by redistributing the global tax burden within cities according to their specific criteria, or even by squarely falsifying tax registers.[50]

When Qurra writes to the pagarch with complaints that he has not sent the required men or sums and admonishes him to do so forthwith "if he values his life", it has been usually understood that the Arab administration was "ruthless" and that the pagarch was responsible on his life for the taxes of his district. Yet over Qurra's five years of tenure, he repeatedly sent such admonitions and Basilios was still around at the end. One explanation of this, though perhaps the least plausible, is that after each "reminder" Basilios would do his job. Another would be to see in those furious letters the sign of Qurra's helplessness against a certain passive resistance from the local officials, who would have responded to some of the calls to prevent the cup from overflowing, holding back as long as they could in other cases, the choice of which was made locally on various grounds. Thus the pagarch would have found himself at the centre of a double negotiation, with the governor in Fusṭāṭ, limiting the number of recruits or payments and inciting ever more fiery rhetoric, and with the local population, offering patronage by exemption to those who could offer something in return.

Students of the period have shied away from such interpretations of the evidence, very common among specialists of European history. Christian officials are, somewhat disdainfully, seen as "collaborators", rather than as standard mediators or arbiters between central authority and local society, i.e. essential actors in an administrative system that relied heavily on them and that they in turn helped to shape. An 8th-century

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the time; Richter (2010) also gives a general overview, while concentrating on the question of language choice.

[50] See among the long bibliography Waquet 1990, and the contributions to Bonney 1995; Menjot and Waquet 1995; Menjot et al. (2005).

Arabic letter published recently by Petra Sijpesteijn shows that this was not only the case with Christian officials. One unidentified Muslim tax administrator writes to an unidentified superior, asking for instructions about how to divide a tax that has been assigned jointly to a Muslim and a "Copt" (*qibṭ*) so as to treat them fairly.[51] I understand this document slightly differently from its editor, namely not as a sign that "the system" was still evolving (which suggests there was an ideal "fixed" form of the system), nor that the author of the letter is concerned with obtaining the highest possible tax (p. 170), but as a testimony of the transactional nature of a system where everything was discussed and negotiated – within, needless to say, a general framework set by the central authority; and also as a clear indication of the fact that lines of demarcation did not only go between Muslims/administrators and Christians/subjects, but also between local and (more or less) central, regardless of religious or ethnic affilitation, namely that local solidarities are a part of the picture one must take into account.[52]

To return briefly to the 7th century, a much more unstable period in terms of social, ethnic, religious, or even political categorisation, this is an approach that would much better allow us to understand our evidence. Even allowing for its polemical tone, the passage from the *Maronite Chronicle* is disarmingly explicit about the role of negotiation in the relations between social groups and the authorities, as well as in the internal relations of those groups, since the patriarch distributes the tax burden within his community, undoubtedly with the necessary checks and balances to keep the powerful happy and the many quiet. Analysing the growing number of 7th-century sources from such a different angle could allow us to see the establishment of the Caliphate as a dialectical, dynamic process and to go beyond the binary opposition between before and after 641 (or, for that matter, 692), which has held scholars firmly attached to the same set of questions and led them to overinterpret some key documents so as to fit them into the pattern.

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51 Sijpesteijn 2006: 173.

52 For analyses of the interplay between local client networks and power relations at the level of the court and state administration, see Boltanski 2006, with further literature; Blockmans 1989; Reinhard 1987; Reinhard 1996.

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Chapter 4
Muʿāwiya's State

Clive Foss

The first caliph Abū Bakr sent Muʿāwiya and his brother Yazīd with the first Arab armies against Syria in 634.[1] When Yazīd, who had been in command, died in 639, Muʿāwiya became governor of the province of Damascus, or of Jordan, or of both. He got control of all Syria including upper Mesopotamia around 646, soon after his relative ʿUthmān became caliph. His position in Syria made him leader of the aggressive campaigns against Byzantium by land and sea which struck deep into Asia Minor and culminated in a great naval victory in 655. During this period, he exchanged embassies with the Byzantine emperor as well as potentates in Armenia, and seemed to have enjoyed considerable autonomy.

When ʿUthmān was assassinated in 656, Muʿāwiya refused to acknowledge ʿAlī as caliph, and was himself recognized as supreme in Syria in 658; the same year, he took control of Egypt. In July 660, in a formal ceremony, Muʿāwiya was proclaimed caliph in Jerusalem; and the following year, with the death of Ali, he took over the entire Islamic realm. He made Damascus his capital and frequently resided there. He ruled successfully, maintaining peace at home, and carrying on the wars against Byzantium, which led to expansion in North Africa and invasion up to the walls of Constantinople. He made major acquisitions in the East. He died in May 680 and was buried in Damascus. In other words, Muʿāwiya was the dominant figure in the Near East during the 40 crucial years that saw the establishment and consolidation of the Arab realm, and ruled all of that realm for twenty. He could reasonably be considered the most important secular ruler of the entire 7th century.

The present essay aims to expand on this outline by looking at Muʿāwiya's rule in three regions – the East (Iraq and Iran), Syria, and Egypt – which present different kinds of information and problems. Knowledge of the East derives largely from historical writings, of Egypt from documents, while Syria is surprisingly obscure. Discussion of the regions will lead to a central question: did Muʿāwiya run an organized state, or did he preside over some kind of tribal confederation, with a low degree of central control, or something else? On the whole scholarly opinion inclines to the negative – that Muʿāwiya's regime was essentially more tribal than bureaucratic, and hardly constituted a state: "… the Sufyanid state was tribally based, even in its metropolis"; "the polity that found itself ruling the conquests was a loose confederation of Arab tribes, not a hegemonic state"; "Muʿawiya maintained his authority not through a complex centralized bureaucracy but

[1] For Muʿāwiya's career, see most recently Humphreys 2006; cf. Hinds 1991 and Lammens 1908.

through a system of delegated rule"; "a centralised administrative and fiscal apparatus is absent under Muʿawiya".[2] On the other hand, Fred Donner, in an important essay written twenty years ago, concluded that "a state did exist from the time of ʿAbd al-Malik and that it probably existed back into the time of Muʿawiya".[3] I will attempt to support this point of view, bringing it to bear on the reign of Muʿāwiya. The discussion will begin with the East, since it is best documented in terms of narrative sources, of which the most important by far is the massive history of al-Ṭabari, written in the early 10th century.

The East

When ʿAlī was assassinated early in 661 (not by an agent of Muʿāwiya but by a Kharijite), his followers proclaimed his son Ḥasan as caliph. Recognizing that the base of his support was inadequate, Ḥasan rapidly came to terms with Muʿāwiya whose forces were advancing on Iraq; he accepted a huge bribe and withdrew to Medina with his brother Ḥusayn. In the summer of 661, Muʿāwiya entered Kūfa, capital of most of Iraq and the Jazīra, and received the allegiance of its notoriously turbulent population. He appointed al-Mughīra governor, leaving him to deal with a city whose loyalty to the memory of ʿAlī remained undiminished. Muʿāwiya chose ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿĀmir to rule Baṣra (its province encompassed Iran and the East), a city wracked by inter-tribal hostility and constant Kharijite risings. The governors in turn appointed provincial governors, tax collectors, heads of the police and religious judges or *qaḍī*s.

Muʿawiya still had to face an important holdout, Ziyād ibn Sumayya, also called because of his illegitimacy Ziyād ibn Abihi ("son of his father"), whom ʿAlī had appointed governor of Fārs province.[4] He refused to recognize Muʿāwiya and remained a center of opposition in his fortified base at Istakhr, where he held out for three or four years. Muʿawiya demanded an account of Ziyād's administration, telling him that he had some of God's wealth (i.e., state property) and to send the money he had. When Ziyād protested that he had used most for legitimate expenses and sent the rest to ʿAlī, Muʿāwiya requested a meeting which Ziyād refused. Finally, when Muʿāwiya threatened to have Ziyād's sons executed, the two came to terms. Ziyād was officially recognized as the caliph's brother (he was henceforth called Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyan) and in July 665 named as governor of Baṣra, with its vast dependencies, to which eastern Arabia (a valuable reserve of manpower) was added. The city had fallen into chaotic turbulence during the lax regime of Ibn ʿĀmir.

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2 Crone 1980: 33; Johns 2003: 418; Humphreys 2006: 94.110; Johns 2003: 422. See also the similar opinions quoted by Hoyland 206: 398. Donner 1995 sees a substantial degree of central control already under ʿUmar and ʿUthmān at the time of the conquests. Hoyland 2006: 401 is also inclined to credit Muʿawiya with at least 'a framework for governing his newly acquired lands'.

3 Donner 1986: 293.

4 For Ziyād, see Hasson 2002, Humphreys 2006: 89–93 and, in most detail, Lammens 1930: 27–161.

No sooner had Ziyād arrived in Baṣra than he gave an eloquently ferocious (and long remembered) speech to the assembled fighters in the mosque.[5] After stressing the offences of the Baṣrans, he announced his absolute determination to establish law and order, enumerating a variety of punishments suitable to the range of current crimes. They included cutting off the tongue of anyone who employed the ancient practice of calling aloud to his fellow-tribesmen for justice or revenge: the punishments were to be dispensed by the state alone. He justified his demands by claiming the support of a higher power: "We rule you by the authority of God, and protect you by the income (*fay'*) of God… You owe us obedience and we owe you justice." This was part of a developing political theory which made the government second only to divine power, and responsible only to it.[6]

Firm control was the order of the day, as Ziyād showed in his whole administration. He made this manifest in his first year by creating a police force of 4000 and a body of 500 guards stationed at the mosque and – a real innovation – by having guards armed with spears and clubs to walk before him in public. Posting guards in the mosque was a necessity, for this was the place where trouble usually started. The mosque was not (as it is today) primarily a place for orderly prayer, but the site of public meetings of the Arab fighters. Instead of praying in straight rows, the men clustered round their tribal leaders, ready to shout, demonstrate or fight at a moment's notice. Under Ziyād, they now had to face the police at the door and the armed guard around the governor's enclosure.[7]

In 670, Mu'āwiya entrusted Ziyād with the government of Kūfa also, making him viceroy effectively of all the old Persian lands, concentrating unprecedented power in his hands. Ziyād divided his year between the two cities, appointing deputies in his absence. Like Baṣra, Kūfa was a constant source of disturbance and hostility to the Umayyad regime from the numerous adherents of Ali. When Ziyād entered the mosque, he gave a mild speech which the people answered with pebbles. Ziyād sent his troops to block the entrances, rounded up eighty men who had stoned him and had their hands cut off on the spot.[8] The *shurta*, or police force, in both cities was composed of infantry and cavalry; in Kūfa, they were recruited from converted Persian troops, who also supervised the market place, and were valuable in suppressing any attempts at sedition.[9] These manifestations and demonstrations of force accompanied a harsh, unremitting justice. In Baṣra, for example, Ziyād had been disturbed by the constant shouting at night of private guards and of people protecting themselves. He declared a curfew and promised to behead anyone found on the streets after the last evening prayer. After a few hundred were executed the first three nights, everyone obeyed the curfew. Ziyād's programs were effective. Crime virtually disappeared from the cities and countryside.

So did political opposition. Ziyād dealt with the 'Alids of Kūfa, whose leader Ḥujr ibn 'Adī openly praised 'Alī and cursed Mu'āwiya, by arresting him and sending him

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5 Ṭabarī II, 73–6, partially quoted in Humphreys 2006: 90f.

6 Morony 1984: 32ff.

7 Lammens 1930: 58.

8 Ṭabarī II, 88.

9 Ṭabarī II, 77, 79; Morony 1984: 91–6.

with a group of his followers to Muʿāwiya in Syria, where the caliph had them killed in what has been described as Islam's first political execution.[10] He also deal with Alids and Kharijites, as Muʿāwiya did when he first controlled Iraq, by setting them against each other.[11] But for most, the very real threat of violence was enough.

Ziyād's main efforts involved subduing the tribes whose fierce loyalties and mutual antagonisms were a constant source of disruption and a threat to any regime. One characteristic incident is supposed to have stirred his animus: when he ruled Basra alone, Ziyād planned to send its excess revenues to the caliph. The powerful eastern Arabian tribes of Azd and Tamīm frustrated his efforts. Ziyād, humiliated, attacked the power of the tribes, especially in Kūfa, the center of ʿAlid opposition. He brought in tribesmen from Baṣra and upper Mesopotamia, and expelled many supporters of ʿAlī. More effectively, he reorganized local government. In place of the seven districts dominated by tribal elders, he created four new quarters, each under an appointed official, with a mixed population that no one tribe dominated. The demobilized Persian soldiers who had converted to Islam were an equally turbulent element, dangerous because they could possibly be employed by opponents of the regime. Here, the caliph intervened directly, ordering many of them sent to Syria where they provided garrisons in the coastal regions. Others went to Baṣra to strengthen the police force, there.[12] Finally, in 671, Ziyād moved on a far greater scale by shipping out 25,000 men from each of his to capitals to remote Khorāsān, whose administration he had already reorganized. They went together with their families to establish an Arab presence at Marw in the northeast, the base for further conquests in central Asia. This action served the purpose of sending the troops where they were needed as well as reducing the garrisons and their expense in Iraq. In all this, the tribes were brought firmly under the control of the government.[13] At the same time, Ziyād treated them fairly, as he had promised in his initial speech. Stipends were paid on time, and their distribution made more regular. Ziyād reviewed the troops, seated under a domed chamber, apparently using the occasion for paying their salaries, much of which were issued in kind from the supply warehouses he organized or rebuilt.[14]

Ziyād also strengthened the mechanisms of government. He enforced tighter central control by reviving many aspects of Sassanian rule. He established a regular chancery to keep records and organize correspondence, together with a registry department that used official seals to ensure the security of government correspondence, and to express the authority of the regime. He is supposed to have been the first Arab official to create a department for sealing documents in the Persian fashion.[15] The whole administration became much more bureaucratic in the Persian style, with income, expenditures,

10 These events are the subject of a long narrative in Ṭabarī II, 111–55; cf. Lammens 1930: 94–7; the phrase is from Hasson 2002: 520.

11 For Muʿāwiya's policy, see Ṭabarī II, 10.

12 Balādhurī 280; cf. note 35 below.

13 Lammens 1930: 125–33, with references; cf. Humphreys 2006: 106f.

14 Morony 1984: 60, 62; Ṭabarī II, 77 claims that Ziyād built the provisions depot.

15 Balādhurī 464; Morony 1984: 64–8.

correspondence and registration of documents put on a much more efficient and regulated basis. Connected with this were reforms in the system of taxation.

An important step was the recovery of the Sassanian registries of crown land which had been lost in the collapse of their regime. ʿAbd Allah ibn Darrāj, Muʿāwiya's *mawla*, to whom he had entrusted the taxes and state lands of Kūfa in 661, immediately after his takeover, found the records and used them to restore state control of former royal lands, some of them seized by tribal leaders during the confusion of the conquests. He also carried out an extensive program of draining and reclaiming marsh land, actively dug canals and increased the extent of agricultural land, building on the extensive experience he had achieved in these fields under the regime of ʿUthmān.[16] The reclaimed lands generated income variously reported as five or fifty million dirhams, while the total revenues from the state lands amounted to 100 million dirhams. That went to the caliph directly.[17] The distribution of the total tax income from Iraq, estimated as 600 million dirhams, is not specified; in theory at least, one fifth was supposed to go to the caliph. Income was large enough that Ziyād could actually reduce the tax rate, but he also greatly increased the number of tax collectors by using Christians to collect from their co-religionists.[18] At a higher level, his financial secretaries were Persians, long skilled in administration. Government tax collectors received high salaries, and accounts of all the taxes were regularly sent to Damascus.[19]

Most of the revenue went to pay the troops who in Ziyād's time amounted to 80,000 stationed in Baṣra and 60,000 in Kūfa.[20] Ziyād also spent substantial amounts on public works, both for utility and to give symbolic expression to his (and Muʿāwiya's) regime. Soon after he took charge of Baṣra, he rebuilt the mosque, which had been of wattle and mud, in permanent materials, constructing a direct entrance from his adjoining residence, so that he could proceed directly to his place in the mosque without having to pass through the assembled crowds.[21] In Kūfa, where he also rebuilt the mosque on a larger scale, he had a *maqsura*, or protected enclosure, built within it for his own use, where he would be safe from any violence.[22] Ziyād profoundly transformed both cities by erecting powerful fortification walls around mosque, governor's palace, treasury and prison, making them into an inner citadel. Entrance to the governor's presence was now regulated by a chamberlain or doorkeeper, who could keep unwanted visitors waiting indefinitely.[23] All this reflected the growing power of the regime, with an ever-clearer distinction between ruler and subject. In the Sassanian style, the ruler was placed at a higher level, distinguished and more remote from his subjects that had been the case

16 Balādhurī 357–64.

17 Morony 1984: 69f., 122.

18 Morony 1984: 103, 116.

19 Morony 1984: 53.

20 Balādhurī 584.

21 Balādhurī 346f.

22 Balādhurī 277.

23 Morony 1984: 79–83.

in the first decades of Islamic rule, when the tribal democracy of Arabia seemed for a moment to have the upper hand over the authoritarian traditions of Persia.

When Ziyād's work was complete, Iraq had an administration as powerful and complex as the Sassanian. Muʿāwiya's regime, exercised through his loyal lieutenant, strengthened central control at the expense of the tribal element. As Ṭabarī wrote: "Ziyād was the first one who consolidated the government's business and secured the monarchy for Muʿāwiya. He compelled the people to obey…He ruled the people with an administration the like of which had never been seen. The people feared him with dread they never had of anyone before him."[24]

The central question here, of course, is how much actual control Damascus exercised over Iraq, and how far Ziyād or any other governor had independent authority. There are some indications to suggest that Muʿāwiya was in charge. Ziyād never claimed any sort of independence or manifested any sort of opposition to his adopted brother. Ziyād's panegyricist Ḥārith b. Badr advertised the governor's subordination to the caliph: "Your brother is the deputy of God, and you his assistant (*wazir*); what a wonderful assistant![25] Muʿāwiya had put him in place and could dismiss him at will. He could interfere in the internal administration, as he did on at least two occasions before and after Ziyād's term. In 663, when complaints arose about the sub-governor of Khorāsān whom Ibn ʿĀmir of Baṣra had installed, Muʿāwiya summoned him to his presence and obliged him to make a public apology.[26] Likewise, in 676, Muʿāwiya himself appointed the commanding general and the chief tax collector of Khorāsān, even those offices were normally in control of the governor of Baṣra.[27] Muʿāwiya exercised the ultimate authority in the case of Hujr ibn Adī and his Alid followers, judging and executing them himself in Syria. In Iraq, Muʿāwiya did not behave like weak rulers who change their governors frequently and play their subordinates off against each other.

Of the 600 million dirhams reportedly collected from Iraq, there is no indication what proportion actually went to Damascus. Necessarily, much of it was spent locally, especially for the army, the regime's greatest expense. Muʿāwiya did get the revenues from reclaimed land, and an anecdote reported by Ṭabarī indicates some degree of central financial control. Muʿāwiya ordered Ziyād to pay 100,000 dirhams to clear the debts of ʿAmr ibn Zubayr. Ziyād paid, but in the meantime Amr had changed the text of the order, so that he would get 200,000. The fraud was discovered when Ziyād presented his claim. In other words, the central regime could draw on local funds and repay them in an organized fashion.[28] Muʿāwiya also got his share of booty: in 670, Ziyād wrote to the governor of Khorāsān, al-Ḥakam b. ʿAmr who had campaigned successfully in Central Asia, that Muʿāwiya had ordered him to select gold, silver and precious objects for the caliph before distributing the loot. Al-Ḥakam proved recalcitrant, though he did

24 Ṭabarī II, 77.
25 Ṭabarī II, 78.
26 Ṭabarī II, 65f.
27 Ṭabarī II, 177f.
28 Ṭabarī II, 206.

set aside the caliph's fifth.[29] Here again, Damascus could demand an extra share of the profits of conquest.

One of the chief means of central control was the post, a fast courier service that the Sassanians had maintained but which had fallen out of use in the early years of the conquest. Muʿāwiya reconstituted it in the East where it ran between the two capitals and between Baṣra and Khorāsān, as well as extending it from Damascus to Medīna. In the case of Arabia, at least, the post was a means of direct contact with the people, for before it departed from the Holy Cities, a herald called on the people to write whatever they liked to the Commander of the Faithful.[30] In effect, then, the post, as well as enabling the caliph to make his will known rapidly, served as a prime source of information and an effective spy service, as the caliph's agents and informers kept him abreast of what was being said and done. He was thus able to respond quickly, with orders, threats or reprimands.[31] The system seems to have reached everywhere, for even the redoubtable Ziyād was reported to fear nothing more than the sound of the courier arriving from Damascus.[32]

Numismatics provides confirming evidence of central control.[33] When the Arabs arrived, Sassanian Iraq had a network of mints that produced standard silver *dirhams*. These coins went on being issued without major change for the first twenty years of Arab rule, bearing on the obverse the name and image of the last great Sassanian ruler Chosroes II (591–628) or of his final successor, Yazdgard III (632–51), and on the reverse a Zoroastrian fire altar flanked by two priests. The inscriptions were in Pahlavi; the coins were dated by the regnal years of Yazdgard, even long after he was dead. The only sign that they were issued by an Arab authority after the conquest was the addition of the Arabic *bismillah* "in the name of God" in obverse in the margin, not impinging on the traditional designs. Their consistent style, weight and fineness are already strong evidence for central control from the very beginning, maintaining an important Sassanian tradition, and providing economic continuity.

Muʿāwiya's regime brought major change. From 661, the first year of Muʿāwiya's reign in the East, coins start to bear dates according to the Hegira. Beginning in AH42 (662/3), coins feature the name of the governor ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿĀmir (the first time the name of a living person appeared on Islamic coinage) or, less commonly, the Caliph Muʿawiya, with his title of Commander of the Faithful. Ziyād also struck coins in his own official name, Ziyād ibn Abī Sufyan; other governors and sub-governors did likewise. These coins are a clear statement of political control, being exercised far from the capital. The East, therefore, produced two sequential series of coins, one in the Persian tradition with only the slightest modifications, the other clearly identified as emanating from the new

29 Ṭabarī II, 110.

30 Ṭabarī II, 213; for the postal service, or *barīd*, see Silverstein 2007: 50–59; cf. Morony 1984: 90f

31 Lammens 1908: 33.

32 Lammens 1908: 64.

33 For what follows, see Album and Goodwin 2002: 1–73, Morony 1984: 38–51 and Foss 2002: 359f.

authorities. The types and language did not change, but the coins were now distinctly labeled as issuing from an Arab-Islamic regime under the authority of a caliph and his governors. In other words, the coins can be taken as reflecting administrative reforms executed by Ziyād and his predecessors, under the authority of Muʿāwiya, whose name and titles significantly appear on the coinage.

Syria

Considering the importance of Syria during this period – seat of the caliph's capital Damascus and base for intensive operations against Byzantium by land and sea – surprisingly little is known of its internal history. Muʿawiya had been established here for twenty years before he became caliph and as supreme ruler presided over a region that seems to have enjoyed considerable stability, disturbed only on its fringes by the incessant war with Byzantium. The major narrative source, Ṭabarī, records virtually nothing about events in Syria beyond cursory mentions of the annual raids against Byzantium and the names of governors. Greek and Syriac chronicles add fitful bits of information, but never enough to reconstruct an image of the country or any part of it in Muʿāwiya's time. There is practically no datable archaeological evidence for this period, even though sources record construction of mosques in Jerusalem and Damascus, and a palace in Damascus; nothing of these has survived. On the other hand, Muʿāwiya may have been responsible for the construction of a fortified palace and bath complex at Sinnabra on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, south of Tiberias, where he was fond of spending the winter.[34]

Muʿāwiya's greatest accomplishment during his long tenure as governor was the creation of a fleet, directed first against Cyprus, then Constantinople. Naval expeditions continued during his caliphate, culminating in the determined attack on Constantinople in 674–8. In conjunction with this activity, he strengthened the defenses of the Mediterranean coast, vulnerable to Byzantine attacks, and stationed soldiers and artisans there. In AH 42 (663/4) he transferred Persians (that is, Persian troops who had adopted Islam) from Iraq and inland Syria to the coastal region at Tyre, Acre and Antioch.[35] The precautions were needed, for at some later date, the Byzantines moved in from the seacoast and actually attacked the walls of Antioch.[36] In terms of organization, he may have separated the district of Qinnasrīn in northern Syria from the district of Ḥimṣ, to make it a *jund* of its own, no doubt to strengthen a region that formed the base for the annual campaigns by land against Byzantium.[37] Otherwise, the internal affairs of Syria or Damascus are almost a blank.

The sources give some hints about the administration and its development. First, Muʿāwiya claimed supreme authority: his government was the government of God, his

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34 See Whitcomb 2002. In the colorful language of Fr. Lammens 1930: 346, Sinnabra was 'Sous les omeyyades…la station d'eau à la mode'.

35 Balādhurī: 117, cf. 148.

36 Balādhurī: 148.

37 Ṭabarī I: 2673, but according to Balādhurī 132 this was done by Muʿāwiya's son Yazīd.

army the army of God, his treasury the treasury of God; he used the title Caliph of God.[38] It seems that Mu'āwiya established a chancery, importing methods from Iraq; that the postal system was reconstituted, giving the regime greater potential control; and that the caliph's headquarters became increasingly monarchical, with a chamberlain and protocol regulating visits.[39] He established a protective barrier in the mosque, and was the first caliph to use bodyguards.[40] His chancery used seals to close letters that previously had been untied.[41] This was supposedly the result of the scandal of 'Amr ibn Zubayr changing the amount of his grant; henceforth the caliph ensured that all his letters were sealed and tied up, organizing a department of the government to handle such registration. According to Ṭabarī he was the first to do this. All this seems to reflect the Sassanian practices of Iraq and perhaps the influence of Ziyād's reforms there.[42]

At the same time, there was much continuity with Byzantine practices, as shown by the career of Sergius b. Manṣūr, whose family had long been prominent in the administration of Damascus. According to Ṭabarī, Sarjun b. Manṣūr al-Rūmī was the caliph's secretary, in charge of his business and specifically of the tax bureau.[43] His father, Manṣūr son of Sergius, had already been in charge of the taxes of Damascus under the Byzantines, then during the Sassanian occupation of 613–30, then again under the restored administration of Heraclius. Because of his bad treatment by the emperor, he had been instrumental in surrendering the city to the Arabs.[44] Leaving the high administration of the capital city in the hands of the family that had long run it implies maintenance of a system. The Romans and Byzantines had relied heavily on local elites to maintain order and take charge of the finances at a municipal level. These families were essential cogs in an elaborate and hierarchical administrative machinery. Their continuity here implies that the machinery was still in place – that is, that Mu'awiya relied on an existing bureaucracy to collect the taxes and to take care of the paperwork of government. In these matters, he was maintaining a system that had long provided the economic base of the state.

Another kind of continuity is reflected in the sole dated monumental inscription of Mu'āwiya's Syria, in the bath building at Hammat Gader near the sea of Galilee.

38 Morony 1984: 33f.; cf. the attestations of "Caliph of God" in Crone 1986: 6f. Mu'āwiya's official vocabulary is strikingly reminiscent of the late Roman where everything associated with the emperor, including departments of government, was called "sacred".

39 Ṭabarī II, 70, reported in 664/5, before Ziyād was appointed to Baṣra.

40 Barrier: Ṭabarī II, 70 (664/5); bodyguards: Ṭabarī II, 205 (no date).

41 Morony 1984: 67f., Ṭabarī II, 206 (no date). Note that the 9th-century historian Ya'qūbī (cited by Hoyland 2006: 403 n.38) also attributes the creation of a police force, bodyguards, door-keepers and a chancery to Mu'āwiya.

42 Morony 1984: 67f. suspects that the story covers up the real origin of the seals department, probably begun by Ziyād and taken over by the center; in any case, cf. Ṭabarī II, 8, where Mu'āwiya sent a letter with his seal at the bottom to Ḥasan in 661, telling him to write what he wanted – in effect, giving him a blank cheque.

43 Ṭabarī II, 205, 837.

44 See Eutychius 127f. For the family, see Sahas 1972: 7f., 17–19, 26–31.

Beginning with the sign of the cross, it names Muʿawiya, Commander of the Faithful, his governor ʿAbd Allah ibn Abī Hāshim, and dates the work by the (Byzantine) indiction, by the year since the foundation of the Roman colony, and by the Hegīra, all equivalent to 5 December 662.[45] It is all very much in the Roman style. In other words, a traditional bureaucracy was keeping records, and the regime was accommodating its public expression to its overwhelmingly Christian population. Monumental inscriptions are in themselves an important sign of authority, proclaiming power in central places and in permanent materials. In the case of this and three others – two on dams in Arabia and one that will be mentioned below – the texts make clear that Muʿāwiya was operating through a regular hierarchy of command and that officials in Syria and Arabia were carrying out his orders.[46] They also confirm his title, Commander of the Faithful, which already appears on the eastern coinage, clear recognition of his supremacy as head of the community.

Documents from a village in the Negev, whose leading family had dominated local affairs for a century or more, provide more substantial evidence of continuity and of administrative practice.[47] They include a group of bilingual requisitions dated to 674–77 in which an Arab official, al-Ḥārith ibn ʿAbd, demands that the people of Nessana provide specified supplies to another Arab. Since the sums are often calculated in quantities of goods or in *nomismata*, it seems that the supplies could be commuted for cash. These are military requisitions for the *rizq* or food allowance for the troops. They have been taken to reflect the activities of a bureaucratic government operating a money economy and fond of detailed record-keeping or as irregular *ad hoc* requisitions that have nothing to do with a central government.[48] Other papyri from the same archive have been taken to show that ʿAbd al-Malik (685–705) was the real innovator, bringing in a systematic land survey and a poll tax.[49] The discussion will return to these topics.

These papyri also reveal administrative changes, They are addressed to the people of Nessana in the *iklim/klema* of Elousa, *kūra/chora* of Gaza. That is, the village was subordinate to a city – Elousa was the only one in the region – which in turn was part of the province whose capital was Gaza. This indicates an organized system reaching far beyond the village, preserving a hierarchy like the Byzantine, but with significant differences. In the Byzantine administration, Elousa was a city of Palestine III, while Gaza was part of Palestine I, whose capital was at Caesarea. In other words, there is substantial innovation here: a new regional capital has been created, and provincial boundaries redrawn. This system, in force by 675, may have coincided with another attested innovation, a new census and taxation system. According to the medieval chronicler Michael the Syrian, who drew on lost early sources for this period, Abu al-

45 Published in Hirschfeld 1997: 239. Note that this site is not far from Muʿāwiya's favoured resort, Sinnabra.

46 Dam inscriptions: Miles 1948 and Hoyland 2006: 415f.

47 See Kraemer 1958: 175–95, documents 60–66.

48 Evidence for central control: Foss 2002: 356f.; no evidence: Johns 2003: 421f., Humphreys 2006: 96. For the dating and significance of these papyri, see Hoyland 2006: 400.

49 Johns 2003: 421f.

A'war, a noted general of Muʿāwiya, counted all the Christian peasants of Syria; up to this time, these Christian peasants had not paid taxes.[50] This census apparently took place between 668 and 670. It appears, then, that Muʿāwiya not only ran an organized administration of the Byzantine style, but also innovated in matters of taxation and provincial organization.

The other inscription from Syria, found in the excavations of a public bath at Andarin, fits into this context.[51] It was issued by a certain Layth ibn al-Diyāl, described as *āmil* of the *āmir* Muʿāwiya and apparently in charge of the district of Qinnasrīn.[52] He demands taxes from a district whose name is missing since the inscription is fragmentary. In any case, it again reflects a regular hierarchy and a government concerned to collect taxes. Its placement in a public building and its inscription on marble may reflect the permanence and ubiquity of the government's demands.

The documents of Nessana reveal a money economy, with taxes calculated in Byzantine gold *nomismata*, coins that were in fact in current use in Syria long after the Arab conquest. Hoards attest to the continuing circulation of both gold (especially the issues of Heraclius through the year 636) and copper coins (silver was rarely struck in this period).[53] An important hoard from the region of Ḥamā as well as extensive local finds throughout the region reveal that Byzantine copper coin was reaching Syria in substantial quantities until about 650, then in diminishing supply until 658. It appears that the Byzantine authorities were supplying coins by a mechanism and for reasons unknown.[54] These coppers were supplemented by a mass of imitations, some very close to the originals, others more resembling the products of a village blacksmith. New evidence indicates, though, that there was significant correlation with the Byzantine coinage, whose metrology the imitations continue to follow. In other words, local production of copper coinage started soon after the Conquest and manifested a degree of central control or at least correlation that enabled a standard weight to be maintained.[55]

As already noted, the coins struck by the Arabs in the East show two stages: one essentially imitative, with the addition of the name of Allah, and the other, struck under Muʿawiya, which names governors and the caliph. The Syrian copper coinage offers a parallel, with the imitative coinage followed by two more organized series: the first employs the standard standing figure of the (unnamed) Byzantine emperor, but adds mintmarks and inscriptions in Arabic as well as Greek, while the second, struck over a wider region, uses distinctive types for each mint, with the mintmarks in both Greek and Arabic. None of these names a ruler or bears dates. The coordination of types and the high standard of minting – especially of the second series – indicate the activity

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50 Michael the Syrian 1901: II, 450. The dates he gives, by the Seleucid year, Byzantine and Arab regnal years, and year of the Hijra do not entirely coordinate.

51 Preliminary text in Hoyland 2006: 416.

52 Since the inscription refers to Muʿāwiya merely as *amīr*, it may date from his time as governor rather than caliph.

53 Gold: Bijovsky 2002; copper: see the next note.

54 Discussed by Phillips and Goodwin 1997.

55 Pottier et al. 2008.

of a central authority that could impose standardization over the entire region. This standardization implies an official system of weights and measures, as indicated by the inscription *wafiya*, "full weight" that appears on some of the bronze issues of Damascus.[56] Dating these coins depends on a text as well as purely numismatic considerations. The Syriac Maronite chronicle, composed in the late 7th century, states that Muʿawiya struck gold and silver coins soon after his accession as caliph, but that they were rejected by the population because they did not bear the sign of the cross.[57] The gold type can actually be identified with an imitative coinage bearing a transformed cross that has only survived in very few specimens, one of them found in a hoard buried near Antioch in about 680; the silver issues were probably Sassanian coin imported for the East.[58] In other words, Muʿāwiya stuck coins in the precious metals. That he was responsible for the organized series of copper coins is indicated by their metrology which establishes a date of around 670 for their introduction.[59] In this case, a coherent series of coins can be taken to indicate increasing central control after a period of apparent decentralization. Since coinage was one of the major indicators of state authority these coins can all be taken to reflect the growth of an organized state, in Syria as in the East.

Egypt

Because of its wealth, Egypt played a important role in the Arab civil wars, beginning with a conflict in 656 over the centralizing policies of the caliph ʿUthmān, who wanted to extract more of Egypt's revenue for the central government.[60] Muʿāwiya, then governor of Syria, suppressed it after a year but then Egypt was caught up with his struggle against ʿAlī. Finally, in 658, Muʿāwiya gained definitive control, sending in governors (the most notable among them Maslama ibn Mukhallad, 667–82) who ushered in a period of stability that lasted past the caliph's death. Only a bare outline of the history of this period can be reconstructed, but a great deal of detailed information is available about the financial, social and economic conditions of a few regions thanks to the survival (and publication) of over 150 papyri, most of them from remote Upper Egypt. These documents constitute by far the largest body of contemporary evidence of any kind from any region for the age of Muʿāwiya.[61]

56 Album and Goodwin 2002, no. 564; cf. Donner 1986: 291, discussing later weights that bear a similar inscription, which he sees as having Qurʾānic echoes.

57 Text in Palmer 1993: 31f., discussed in Foss 2002: 361ff.

58 Persian silver started to enter Syria soon after the conquest of the East, apparently in small quantities, but enough for the Nessana documents to mention *miliaresia*, the Greek term for the Sassanian coins. See Kraemer 1958: 204 no. 71 and 322 no. 158; cf. Foss 2002: 358f.

59 Pottier et al. 2008.

60 For the history of Egypt in this period, see Kennedy 1998 and Sijpesteijn 2007a and 2007b.

61 Despite their abundance and manifest importance, these documents have hardly been exploited: they are mentioned only in passing, for example, by Humphreys 2006: 95.

The administrative system centered on the governor named by the caliph in Fusṭāṭ (Babylon), seat of the head of the police and the qadi, and base for the Muslim troops who numbered 40,000 by Muʿāwiya's time.[62] Under him were *duces* or *emirs* in four or five provincial capitals and local worthies, pagarchs, in some sixty cities. This was a well established chain of command, with the Arabs (called Saracens or *Muhājirūn*) constituting an elite ruling class based in the capital and rarely impinging directly on local affairs. Most documents deal with taxes, for which the pagarch was an essential cog, gathering and recording information at the local level, passing it up to higher authorities who used it as a basis for demands for taxes in kind or gold, and for requisitions of goods and money. All this involved extensive record keeping whose fragments have survived. There is no doubt that Egypt maintained the complex traditions of Byzantium, with some important new elements.

The largest and most informative group of papyri is the archive of Flavius Papas, pagarch of the remote Apollinopolis in Upper Egypt: it contains 107 documents, almost all of them with some useful content.[63] Official letters to Papas from the secretaries of the provincial administration comprise a large part of this archive. They reveal a highly centralized regime, with orders passing down the chain of command and with a government keeping careful accounts, making constant demands, and being aware even of seemingly small details at the local level.

This evidence is often overlooked because the first editor of the archive of Papas dated it to the early 8th century, leaving it overshadowed by the much grander and better known archive of Aphrodito. Thirty years later, closer examination revealed that the documents of Papas that could be dated belonged to the 660s or 670s – i.e. the reign of Muʿawiya – and that the situation they present, especially in regard to the taxes, the administration and the navy was not something new to the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik but already existed a generation earlier.[64]

Most revealing for the present subject are the requisitions of men and goods for the fleet. A letter from the governor himself shows the operations involved: he demands that sailors be sent together with their equipment and food supplies (which the pagarch had to provide) and wants it done fast.[65] Judging by better known later parallels (from the vast archive of Aphrodito of the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik) this was preliminary to a *kourson* or expedition against Byzantium.[66] In these attacks, the fighters were Muslims, but the actual sailors were Egyptians (as attested for the great Muslim victory off the coast of Asia Minor, the Battle of the Masts, in 655).[67] The regime also conscripted workers

62 For the administration, see Christides 1991 and the two articles of Sijpesteijn cited in note 60 above.

63 The great majority were admirably published in Rémondon 1953, with a few others in Gascou 1979; they are discussed in detail in Foss 2009.

64 See Gascou and Worp 1982.

65 Papyrus P. Apoll. 106 in Gascou 1976.

66 For the organization of the naval attacks against Byzantium in the early 8th century see Bell 1910: xxxii–xxxv and Fahmy 1966.

67 Ṭabarī I, 2867–70; Ibn Abd al-Hakam 189–91; cf. Humphreys 2006: 57f.

for the shipyards in Fusṭāṭ, especially caulkers and carpenters, assigning quotas to each pagarchy.[68] This caused real problems and led to such a shortage of skilled workers at the local level that pagarchs sometimes sent the wrong kind of men or, when they didn't have enough, tried to borrow them from neighbors.[69] These demands, coupled with requisitions of supplies and goods for the fleet, put a severe strain on the local economy and provoked resistance from the population. Conscripts paid substitutes to go in their place because they wanted to avoid being sent to sea.[70] In other cases, furiously denounced by the emir, caulkers sent to Fusṭāṭ simply ran away; pagarchs were ordered to round them up and send them back.[71]

These documents reflect the enormous importance of the *jihād* against Byzantium, especially in its naval aspects. All this activity posits a central authority: workers, equipment and supplies had to be assembled, ships built, expeditions planned; everything demanded large scale coordination and financing. Since the expeditions used ships and crews from Syria as well as Egypt, they were not the product of a local initiative, but of a central authority strong enough to mobilize and coordinate impressive resources from more than one area. No local governor had authority over another. Only the caliph could command action that involved more than one province. The contemporary Armenian historian Sebeos, writing about a massive attack on Byzantium by land and sea in 654 calls that authority "the king of Ismael" – that is, the caliph ʿUthmān.[72] According to his account, troops were mobilized from the whole empire (Persia, Khuzistan, Mesopotamia, India and Egypt), and sent to Muʿāwiya "prince of the army who resided in Damascus" (that is, he was then governor of Syria). Ships were built and a huge fleet assembled in Alexandria. Plainly, the governor of Syria had no control over the eastern provinces or Egypt; such large scale war could only be the product of central control. Note in this account, which predates the caliphate of Muʿawiya, the distinction between the "king" and the "prince", stressing an administrative reality in which the caliph gave orders to the provincial governors. During the reign of Muʿāwiya, naval expeditions were organized from Egypt and Syria together and Egyptian sailors conscripted.[73] The Egyptian economy was organized with war in mind, and that war could only be directed from Damascus.

The Egyptian papyri also help illuminate those of Nessana, whose requisitions have an exact parallel in the Papas archive which mentions skins paid to an Arab as *rouzikon* (called *rizq* in Arabic), part of a routine list of such payments.[74] Other documents reveal that the *rouzikon* also included elaborately embroidered cloaks, which the pagarchs

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68 Documents 9, 29, 30 and 38 in Rémondon 1953.

69 Ibid., document 38.

70 Ibid., document 28.

71 Ibid., document 9.

72 Sebeos chapter 50, pp. 143–7.

73 Naval expeditions against Byzantium are attested for 664, 668, 669 and 670, with Egyptian participation noted for 664, 668 and 669: Ṭabarī II, 67, 85–7.

74 Rémondon 1953, document 94.

farmed out to contractors to make.[75] The *rouzikon* was a requisition for supplies (including clothing and shoes) to which the Muslims were entitled as conquerors; it formed part of the regular obligations of the population, its products were collected, stored in storehouses and issued as needed according to demand notes from the governor or his subordinates.[76] In other words, these were not just irregular exactions, but part of a complex financial system. Likewise, the idea that censuses and land surveys began with ʿAbd al-Malik is belied by these documents that have similar lists of taxpayers arranged by *capita,* and even include a very detailed survey of 14 properties, perhaps preliminary to preparing a more general cadaster.[77] Coptic documents record that censuses of village populations, evidently for tax purposes, were carried out as early as 663, if not before.[78] The poll tax frequently appears; in fact it goes back to the earliest days of the Arab conquest, as shown by other papyri.[79] In other words, however much his successor may have added or improved, Muʿāwiya's regime already contained the elements of a complex hierarchy, most clearly visible in Egypt.

It is sometimes objected that the Egyptian papyri say nothing about the caliph's government and provide no evidence of resources from Egypt being sent to Damascus: "That Muʿāwiya's name appears only on this protocol, and never in the text of the papyri, indicates how limited was central influence upon the provincial administration of Egypt"; "the Egyptian evidence…suggests that the Islamic administration of Egypt…was to all intents and purposes autonomous. It was the governor in al-Fusṭāṭ, not the Caliph in Damascus, who was the ultimate authority"; "Certainly there is no evidence in the papyri of large sums being exported from Egypt".[80] At first sight, the papyri support such notions, for they give no indication of money being sent to Damascus, nor do they reveal any intrusion by the caliph's government in local affairs, or even suggest that it had any direct control. But statements like this reflect a misconception of the nature of the documentation. The papyri are intensely local documents that deal in most cases with the concerns of a pagarch and his relations with the next level of government, the provincial emir. The caliph was immensely remote, even the governor in Fusṭāṭ was hundreds of miles away. The pagarch had to make sure the taxes were collected, but was not concerned with where they went or how they were spent. If there is no evidence for Egypt exporting money or goods, it is because we have no documents from the destinations. Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that the papyri do not reflect the activities of the central government. Absence of Damascus does not mean its will was

75 Ibid., documents 29 and 30.

76 These demands go back to the time of the conquest: Balādhurī 214f.; see also Mayerson 1994 and 1995 and note also Rémondon's apposite remark (1953: 197): 'l'arzaq al-muslimīn [i.e., rizq] est un chapitre des impots réguliers'.

77 Capita: Rémondon 1953, documents 74, 76; survey: 73.

78 Quoted by Hoyland 2006: Appendix 3.

79 It is called variously *diagraphon* or *andrismos*: Rémondon 1953, documents 39, 42, 24. For these terms, see Gonis 2000 with further references; cf. Morelli 2001: 1 for the introduction of this tax. See most recently Hoyland 2006: 400, 402.

80 Johns 2003: 418 n. 10; Kennedy 1995: 362 and 371.

not felt; it lay behind the demands for goods and money, especially when they involved the fleet, and ultimately determined how they were to be used.

The Papas documents do in fact reveal the activity of the (very remote) central government on one occasion, when the "Saracens of the *amiras tōn pistōn*" (i.e. Commander of the Faithful, translating the caliph's title *amīr al-mu'minīn*) bring a message to the pagarch of neighboring Latopolis dealing with compulsory purchases.[81] The status of the messengers suggests this was a matter of some importance, in which the emir had refused any compromise. The pagarch wrote to Papas with some vehemence: "Let him taste the water" (apparently an invitation for the emir to drown in the Nile); "the Devil brought him". The Saracens of the Commander of the Faithful are plainly agents of the central government, and almost certainly of the post which, as noted, Mu'āwiya developed both for communications and as a means of keeping check on his subordinates. In this case it appears that news of some local problem (or of many; the agents could have been visiting several pagarchs) had reached Damascus, and that the government was responding.

Other sources reveal that Mu'āwiya had considerable control over the armed forces and resources of Egypt. In 673, Mu'āwiya transferred troops from Baṣra to Fusṭāṭ, Egypt's capital; during his administration, the number of fighters stationed there doubled to 40,000.[82] Likewise, he greatly increased the garrison of Alexandria by sending in men from Syria and Medīna.[83] The same caliph, in an apparent effort to conduct a census and thus to control the number of men enrolled on the *dīwān*, appointed a man over every tribe to go around each morning and record all births during the night.[84]

Mu'āwiya resumed the shipment of food and oil to support the Muslims of Medīna; this had begun in the caliphate of 'Umar and had involved excavating the ancient canal of Trajan from Babylon to the Red Sea, and a significant reorientation of Egypt's economy, with much of the grain that had been sent as *embolē* to Constantinople now going to Arabia.[85] Mu'āwiya's governor, Maslama ibn Mukhallad, paid salaries in cash and in kind to the men on the *dīwān*, as well as to the scribes and for the transport of grain to the Hijāz. He sent the surplus of 600,000 dinars to Mu'āwiya.[86]

The sources then show that revenue was indeed sent to the caliph. The sum may seem small, but this is misleading, for the Caliph did not need all Egypt's revenue: he could order the way the money was spent in Egypt, not just on the fleet but also on sending

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81 Rémondon 1953, document 37, with commentary.

82 Maqrizi 178.

83 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 191f. According to another version quoted in the same passage, Mu'āwiya sent 4000 men from Medīna and ordered another 4000 to remain on alert in Palestine, ready to be sent to Egypt.

84 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 102.

85 Balādhurī 216.

86 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 101f. If this sum represents the fifth of revenues traditionally due to the caliph, it would imply a total tax income of three million *dinars*, consonant with the attested taxes of two million under Amr at the beginning of the occupation and the four million raised by his successor 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd (648–58), a sum considered excessive: see Balādhurī 216f.

food to the Holy Cities of Arabia, and on paying the salaries of the troops. Muʿāwiya evidently extracted what he needed from Egypt whose immensely detailed record keeping, operating through a tightly-controlled bureaucracy, enabled him to direct the country's resources as he chose. As for the army, the governor may have commanded the garrisons, but it was Muʿāwiya who determined their numbers and distribution, by sending in reinforcements to both Fusṭāṭ and Alexandria. These were drawn from Arabia and Iraq, further evidence of the caliph's ultimate control of the empire's armed forces.

Another question that arises (already in discussions of Roman and Byzantine Egypt) is how far this system was typical. Plainly, something very much like it functioned in Syria, or at least in the parts closest to Egypt, as shown by the Nessana papyri. The evidence for Iraq shows something similar: a highly bureaucratic system, of different origins but equally complex.

Conclusion

The discussion may now return to the central question: did Muʿāwiya run something that can be recognized as a state or did he preside over a loose tribal federation? Did his regime feature a hierarchic bureaucracy or was it one without centralized tax collection? Did the subject population essentially run their own affairs in exchange for tribute? Before attempting to answer such questions, it might be useful to consider what a "state" means.

Fred Donner, investigating these same questions, posited the elements necessary for a political body to be considered a state. They included a defined governing group, an army and a police force, a judiciary, and a tax administration.[87] To these, I would add relations with and recognition by foreign powers. Donner's terms are not so different form those of the standard modern definition of a state embodied in the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), according to which the state as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: (a) a permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states. Both definitions can be brought to bear on Muʿāwiya's regime.

No one would dispute that Muʿāwiya's caliphate had a permanent population, a defined territory, and a government or governing group (composed of the caliph, the governors and their subordinate). It entered into relations with other states (Muʿāwiya made treaties with Byzantium).[88] It had a judiciary headed by the *qadis* for Muslims, while the Egyptian documents make manifest the judicial powers of amirs and pagarchs for the Christian population. A tax administration is abundantly attested.[89]

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87 Donner 1986 applies these criteria systematically to early Islamic history, focusing especially on the early 8th century, and deriving much information from Egypt.

88 See the documents in Beihammer 2000: 310–32.

89 It pre-dated Muʿāwiya; note the comment of Donner 1986: 288: '…the tax institutions of the state were well-developed already by a decade or so after the conquest of such areas as Egypt and Palestine.'

Still, objections can be raised about the way the provinces related to the center, about the degree of control the caliph had over the governors, and about the rudimentary or sophisticated nature of the administrative system. Such questions may be considered under the headings of central control (or lack of it) over the administration, the finances and the armed forces.

The power of a central authority can be represented symbolically. In Muʿāwiya's case his image on the coinage, his name on monumental inscriptions, as well as association of him and his offices with God in addition to his usual title of Commander of the Faithful indicate that his supremacy was formally recognized in the East and Syria. In every region, it is clear that Muʿāwiya chose all the governors and could dismiss them at will. There is no record of a governor rebelling, disobeying orders, trying to follow an independent policy or refusing to leave office when required. Likewise, the caliph could intervene in a governor's domain by naming sub-governors or financial officials, as he did in the East. Muʿāwiya's subordinates followed his orders, especially Ziyād in Iraq who exercised considerable power, but never manifested any independence from the caliph. It seems that Muʿāwiya learned from his own experience as governor of Syria, when he had considerable autonomy (treaties were even made with him, rather than the caliph, according to Byzantine sources), and determined to reduce the power of the governors or make them loyal subordinates.

For central control to exist, the government must have control of the revenues. For Muʿāwiya, this worked two ways: he extracted revenue from the provinces, and he determined how locally raised revenues were to be spent. Ziyād in the East and Maslama b. Mukhallad in Egypt sent part of the taxes directly to the caliph who also received a substantial income from reclaimed and state lands in Iraq. He could also order payments to be made from local treasuries and could specify the booty he wanted from victorious campaigns. The revenues themselves were raised by a system that was far from primitive: the new Arab rulers took over and even strengthened the elaborate fiscal mechanisms inherited from the Sassanians in the East and the Byzantines in Egypt. The Egyptian documents in particular reveal a complex bureaucratic regime even more centralized under the Arabs, as the pagarchs, formerly local bigwigs, become cogs in the administrative machinery, passing orders down the line and money and goods up. Iraq and Egypt at least had hierarchical bureaucratic administrations that worked through an elaborate network of officials and maintained sophisticated systems of detailed record keeping. These mechanisms would have enabled Muʿawiya's governors to raise as much or more revenue as their pre-Islamic predecessors.

Muʿāwiya's control over the armed forces of the caliphate is clearly attested. He had the power to move troops from one province to another: Persians from Iraq to Syria, and reinforcements for the garrisons of Egypt from Iraq and Arabia. That is, the central authority could reach into the provinces to reassign forces stationed in one region to another. But far more important was the *jihād* against Byzantium and its main branch, the navy. Here, as the Egyptian documents show, the central government could mobilize the entire resources of the province to support its military campaigns, combining men and material from Egypt with those from Syria. Since more than one province was involved, this could not be the initiative of a local governor. A similar situation

presumably operated in regard to the army, constantly campaigning against Asia Minor, but here the sources are silent.

Muʿāwiya, then, presided over something that could be called a state rather than a loose confederation of tribes. It determined how revenues were raised and spent, and had a hierarchic bureaucracy, very different but equally complex in the former Roman and Persian territories. Finally, the documentary evidence shows that the population of Egypt (and implies a similar situation in Palestine), had no autonomy but was highly regulated by a sophisticated and complex administration, carefully controlled by the new Arab rulers.

This does not mean that Muʿāwiya was a dictator; there were clear limits to his power so that he could not ride roughshod over the opinions or desires of the Arab elite or the subject population. At the beginning of his reign, for example, he twice had to back down in the face of opposition: he wanted to convert the church of St. John in Damascus into a mosque, but acceded to the objections of the Christian population; and as part of his compromise with ʿAlī's son Ḥasan, he granted him the revenue of Darabjird in Iran, but had to withdraw this when the people of Baṣra refused to give up that source of their own income.[90] In Medina, he couldn't get the governor Sa'īd ibn al-Ās to demolish the house of Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam, nor when Marwān became governor in 674, could he force him to demolish Sa'īd's house.[91] This seems an unsuccessful effort to set members of he powerful Medinan elite against each other. This elite was important enough that Muʿāwiya went in person to Medīna in 676 to persuade the leaders of the Quraysh to accept his nomination of his son Yazīd as his successor in the caliphate.[92] In this case, he plainly had only the power to persuade, not to order.

There is also some numismatic evidence that seems to suggest that Muʿāwiya's writ barely ran in remote Kerman, in the eastern part of Persia. Its governor, al-Ḥakam ibn Ābī al-'Ās struck an unparalleled series of coins from 56–58 AH (675–78). On their obverse, they bear a legend interpreted as *bismillah rabb al-Ḥakam*, "in the name of God, the lord of al-Ḥakam". The coinage, struck in more mints than usual for this district has been taken to indicate increased control of the region, at least by its governor, who seems to be acknowledging no superior but God. He appears to be acting with considerable independence from his superior in Baṣra and from the far-away caliph. On the other hand, the legend can equally well be read as *bismillah rabb al-ḥukm* "in the name of God, lord of Judgement", a statement that invites comparison with the Kharijite rebellious slogan *la ḥukma illa bi-Allah*, "Judgement belongs to God alone". In that case, the governor could be responding to a Kharijite challenge, or, alternatively, this al-Ḥakam himself could have been a Kharijite, using words reminiscent of their doctrine.[93]

Some problems in understanding the nature of Muʿāwiya's regime arise from the way we view the material: if from the viewpoint of the reign of ʿAbd al-Malik, Muʿāwiya's administration may indeed look primitive because it consisted of two discrete systems,

90 Balādhurī 191; Ṭabarī II, 3, 10.

91 Ṭabarī II, 164.

92 Ṭabarī II, 176f.

93 Sears 2003: 5–25; *contra* Album and Goodwin 2002: 17 with note 71.

employing different languages. It involved no overlying and uniform proclamation of Islam nor did it produce a uniform coinage. Certainly, there is no doubt that ʿAbd al-Malik introduced major changes that produced a uniform administrative system, but he could do that because of the foundations of central control that Muʿāwiya had laid.

Muʿāwiya's administration also looks very different when viewed in the context of the ruling Arab elite or of the vast non-Muslim subject population. Looking only at the Arabs, it is obvious that the tribes and their leaders were of absolutely primary importance for ensuring the continuance of Muslim control, and that they had to be handled with great care or overpowering force. Central bureaucratic control was barely relevant in this context, for the ruling elite did not pay taxes and could not be harnessed easily. But for the vast majority of subjects, who paid the taxes that supported the state, life under an organized bureaucratic administration continued as it had for untold ages, except that the system became even better organized and exercised tighter control under Muʿāwiya than it had previously. This does not mean that Muʿawiya invented the system. There was already a high degree of central control under ʿUthmān, who could mobilize huge fleets, and perhaps even, as the tradition suggests, under ʿUmar who is reputed to have laid the basis for Islamic administration. But for that more sources would be necessary – at least more sources outside Egypt where the papyri show the Arabs taking over and exploiting the existing system from the beginning.

In sum, it is reasonable to suppose that Muʿāwiya presided over an organized state with a complex government, most evident in Egypt but also Iraq. Coinage in all three regions supports this. Unfortunately, the central region, Syria, remains obscure. This entity was perhaps not yet what could be called an Islamic state (ʿAbd al-Malik put everything into Arabic and actively proclaimed Islam), but it was nevertheless a complex system that produced powerful results.

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Chapter 5

First Century Islamic Currency: Mastering the Message from the Money

(Issues of Historiography: An Alternate Hypothesis)

Gene W. Heck

The Historiographical Challenge

The meteoric rise of Islam in the 1st/7th to 4th/10th centuries was a watershed in human history. At its 2nd/8th century-zenith, the new Islamic Empire (*Dār al-Islām*) was larger than its Roman predecessor. Indeed, it was the largest land mass ever united under a single *political* administration to that age – stretching from the borders of India at its eastern-most extension, across Asia and North Africa, and upward into Europe, enveloping the Andalusian Peninsula and extending into France. The extent of its *commercial* outreach was more widespread still – creating a massive new common "common market" that spread from the Pacific Ocean in the Far East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. Muslim money, serving as an acknowledged premier currency, supported this vast trade expansion – with coin hoards found in China, Russia, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, and North Africa attesting both to its valued acquisition and to its widespread use. The evolution of Islamic currency as the "dollar of the early Middle Ages" was critical for a variety of vital reasons. For overarchingly, the Muslim use of coins symbolized socioeconomic and imperial issues involving the official extent of jurisdiction and the exercise of sovereignty – internally, to control the flow of money and to implement monetary policy, and externally, to assert "political statements" and underwrite foreign commerce – with this authority firmly founded in Islamic jurisprudence, as Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal asserts: "The striking of dirhams is not permitted except in the mint (*dār al-ḍarb*) with the explicit permission of the ruler (the *sulṭān*)".[1] To which, al-Nawawī appends: "The striking of coins is a foremost duty of the *imām*."[2]

Historically, then, Islamic minted currency has served both as a jurisdictional "identification card" and a *curriculum vitae* of accomplishment– a cornerstone of economic process in organizing society, preserving its well-being, establishing relationships between the governing and the governed, serving shared interests, and for exchanging services. If one seeks clear insights into a dynasty's imperial policies, then,

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1 Abu Yaʿlā 1966 (citing Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal): 181.

2 Al-Nawawī 1983: 1, 258.

one must first study its monetary system – both the basic metallurgy involved in its creation and the inscriptions that signal its formal mission and intent.

In seeking to document the Muslims' quite remarkable political, commercial, and monetary expansion, then, recourse, quite naturally, is reflexively to consult early primary medieval Islamic sources. Yet such a course is not without its historiographic perils, as their shortcomings as scholarly resources are well known. Indeed, many volumes have been written over issues of hagiography, sectarian bias, and proximity to events. Accordingly, two eminent scholars within the field of Islamic economic history with often diametrically opposing viewpoints, Patricia Crone and R.B. Serjeant, nonetheless join in acknowledging the futility of such undertakings using "the methodology that currently prevails in the field" – each calling for new analytic tools to examine the extant body of finite evidence.[3]

In that quest, this inquiry seeks both new tools, and a better synthesis of existing ones, relying heavily upon minted currency and its precious metals content. The utility of numismatics as an ancillary tool of Islamic historiography that offers a reliability cross-check on the sources cannot be overestimated. For in many ways, coins are a virtual "mirror of the past" – the proverbial historiographic "smoking gun" – residual physical documents conveying, in very tangible terms, a narrative of political and economic events to which the primary textual sources often merely allude. Today, orientalist criticism of the veracity of the early Islamic primary sources respecting the proliferation of precious metals in the early medieval Ḥijāz is paralleled by numismatist critique of their use in documenting the early evolution of Islamic currency. Hence, reconciling the monetary messages presented by the medieval chroniclers and geographers with the evidence offered in the form of mining residuals and surviving coin specimens – in effect, comparing the textual with the tangible – can prove both illuminating and reconstructive. For as Serjeant has famously observed: "Criticism of historical sources should aim at eliciting from them what is possible to accept in evidence, not at manufacturing a case for destroying them *in toto*."[4]

Islam's Commitment to a Monetary Economy

The early rapid spread of the *Dār al-Islām* in its dynamic first century of ascendancy, commencing in the year 12/632, established a widespread empire that would ultimately stretch from the borders of India in the East to the shores of the Atlantic in the West. Its rapid expansion, in turn, soon created a concurrent need to establish a premier, unquestioned currency both to meet surging economic demand and to capture commercial opportunities that the newly-won political conquests had established. As commencing with the onset of the Gregorian calendar era through the 5th century A.D., most conventional classic historiography contends, tribes of the West Arabian Peninsula had enjoyed substantial commercial contact with the Roman Empire to the northwest

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3 Crone 1987: 199; Watt 1953: 33.

4 Serjeant 1990: 486.

– with the latter purchasing significant high unit value products – frankincense, myrrh, and spices, as well as other exotic luxury goods in transit from the Orient – requited in their purchases by the prevailing Roman currency, the *denarius*, a gold and silver coinage issue whose name was adopted by the Muslims when they began minting their own gold *dīnār*. The Arabs of antiquity likewise had enjoyed considerable trade contact with Sāsānid Persia to the northeast, and numerous Sāsānid silver *dirham* coins dating to the 6th and 7th Gregorian centuries have been found in East Arabia as well as throughout the Arabian Peninsula. Much of the Persian silver needed for production of this coinage, in fact, was mined in al-Dawādimī district in Central Arabia, the Najd. Today, tangible proof of this mining proliferates the region, with the remnants of more than ten major silver mines directly attributable to this production.[5] These various trade transactions, in turn, caused the many markets of the West Arabian Peninsula to be replete with a variety of circulating foreign currencies – most particularly the *denarius* of Rome and the *dirham* of the Sāsānids – which are frequently cited within pre-Islamic poetry. Indeed, the terms *dīnār* and *dirham* also appear within the *Qur'ān* itself as well as in some of the earliest Prophetic traditions (*aḥādīth*). *Sūrat Āli ᶜImrān, Āya 75,* for instance, refers to *dīnārs* in admonishing the need for prompt debt repayment. *Sūrat Yūsuf, Āya 20*, in turn, speaks of brothers of Joseph selling him into bondage in Egypt for a few *dirhams*.[6]

Abū ʻUbayd quotes ʻAlī b. Abī Ṭālib that the dowry paid upon his marriage to Fāṭima, daughter of Prophet Muḥammad, was "four hundred dirhams of the weight of six (*mithqāls*)."[7] Also, according to al-Bukhārī, citing Jābir: "The Prophet forbade the selling of unripe fruit, and none should be sold except for *dīnārs* and *dirham*s."[8]

There are likewise early source reports, among them that of ʻAbū Ubayd, that the Emperor Heraclius sent to the Prophet Muḥammad a large quantity of Byzantine *dīnārs* which the latter apportioned amongst his Companions; whereas al-Bukhārī, describing the official procedures prescribed for levying the Islamic *zakāt* aggregate wealth tax, similarly asserts: "Nothing is to be collected on gold until it reaches twenty dīnārs in value; after which a half dīnār is levied; whereas for the *waraq* (silver currency), nothing is to be levied on it until its value reaches two hundred dirhams, after which five dirhams are to be collected."[9] Abū ʻUbayd, in like manner, contends that Caliph ʻUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb assessed the poll tax (*jizya*) on non-Muslims at forty dirhams on those who customarily transacted in silver in their business dealings and at four dīnārs on those who customarily transacted in gold.[10]

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5 Ḥussain 2002: 3.

6 Daftar n.d.: 5.

7 Abū ᶜUbayd 1981: 468.

8 Al-Bukhārī 1896: 3, 394. Indeed, the Arabs' term for silver coinage, *dirham*, was influenced by its Byzantine equivalent, *drachma*; as was the Arabic term for copper money, *fulus*, which was derived from the Byzantine/Greek equivalent, *follis*.

9 Abū ᶜUbayd 1981: 255, no. 624; al-Bukhārī. *Kitāb al-Zakāt,' Bāb Wujūb al-Zakāt*, as related in Raḥāḥala 1999: 30.

10 Abū ᶜUbayd 1981: 42: fol. 1000; Ibn ᶜAbd al-Ḥakam 1979: 152.

Precious metals, gold and silver, together with the highly innovative capitalistic facilities that they underwrote, likewise contributed significantly to the initial Islamic conquests – as well as to subsequent evolutions of both the economic and monetary dynamics of the *Dār al-Islām*. For with private businessmen donating capital and other primary physical resources to their tribal army, an admixture "bourgeoisie class" consisting of military commanders and wealthy landowners now gradually evolved. Given their mercantile heritage, it should not be surprising that the pursuit of capital, both in precious metals and other material resources, was their economic motivation.

Without question, possessing prodigious gold and silver reserves, early Muslims enjoyed access to abundant working capital to financially underwrite their conquests – empowering them to procure weapons and conscripted warriors needed for successful campaigns. Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr asserts, for instance, that ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān donated 950 camels, 50 horses, and 1000 dīnārs to the embryonic Arab army. Other sources relate that Ṣafwān b. Umayya provided Prophet Muḥammad with over two hundred suits of armor, plus 50,000 dirhams, for his preparations to do battle with the banū Thaqīf at the Battle of Ḥunayn. Others are said to have provided 40,000 *dirhams* each.[11]

In seeking to discern the motivations that underlay these donations – the driving economic force behind their cash and in-kind contributions that impelled their intense commitment – German scholar L.M. Hartman concludes that the victorious troops: "were really not an army at all but rather diverse groups of 'capitalistic entrepreneurs,' whose 'entrepreneur-in-chief,' Muḥammad, had persuaded them to invest substantial capital in the business."[12]

Indeed, the intense pursuit of such incentives leads Frederick Donner to speculate that the initial Arab conquests happened explicitly because the Quraysh wanted to expand their commercial interests. It may be argued even more compellingly, in fact, that the entire Arab conquest movement was primarily a capitalistic movement motivated by the quest for personal gain. Indeed, it was precisely to this motive that the first caliph, Abū Bakr, urgently appealed when he wrote to Arabia's tribal chiefs urging them to mobilize for war so that they might get "booty from the 'Greeks.'"[13]

In the ongoing quest for remuneration (called in Arabic *ghanīma*) for such capital outlays, according to al-Ṭabarī, immediately after the "Battle of al-Jalūlā", Caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb ordered that four-fifths of the land holdings conquered in any region be allotted to his victorious soldiers, with the remaining one-fifth retained by state in the manner that longstanding Arab "tribal tradition" had prescribed. It was within this "commerce-favorable" operating milieu, then, that the Muslims' initial conquests took place, and wherein their empire set its roots and grew and gained its wealth.[14]

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11 Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr n.d.: 3: 1040.

12 Hartman 1909: 449.

13 Donner 1981: 270–71. On this profit motivation, see also al-Balādhurī 1987: 188ff, *ʿAmr Filasṭīn*.

14 Al-Ṭabarī 1879: 1, 2469–971; al-Wāqidī 1965: 3: 890; al-Balādhurī 1959: 1, 362–3; Ibn ᶜAbd al-Barr n.d.: 2, 720.

For the reality was that gold and silver, the basic underpinnings of that indigenous wealth, were ascending to their medieval apogees in economic significance – as some of the most prolific mines in West Arabia were now rapidly coming on line and would yield prodigious output for several centuries – indeed, well into the ʿAbbāsid era. With regard to the "Mahd al-Dhahab" (*maʿdin banī Sulaym*) mine site, for instance, both Ibn Saᶜd and Ibn al-Athīr provide strong corroborative testimony that the *fiscus* of Prophet Muḥammad's immediate successor, Caliph Abū Bakr, received substantial revenue from its operations, with the former stating: "Much money was brought to it from maᶜdin al-Qabalīya and maᶜdin Juhayna, and maᶜdin banī Sulaym was also opened in the caliphate of Abū Bakr, whence he received s*adaqa* from it and deposited it in the Treasury, and Abū Bakr distributed it to the masses."[15]

Four other key early medieval Ḥijāzī mines were similarly directly linked to activities of Prophet Muḥammad's Quraysh tribe – and radiocarbon dating and other tangible artifacts suggest that many others were active in his time as well.[16] From a financial standpoint, some of the productive outputs of these mines were quite remarkable. The more than 1,500,000 fine gold ounces extracted at "Mahd al-Dhahab," for instance, would today be worth more than a billion dollars ($1,200,000,000); whereas the 1,000,000 ounce yield at the Ḥamḍa mine would be valued at $800,000,000 at the $800 per ounce gold prices prevailing in 2008; and these are but two of the more active production sites amongst more than one thousand mines operational in this era.

This very prodigious precious metals output, as will be shown, was soon doctrinally reflected in contemporary Muslim monetary policy. Like other early medieval dynasties, of course, the quality of Islamic currency – a function of the *fineness* (*ᶜiyār'*) of the Muslim empire's precious metals ore – was key to its incipient commercial success. Yet that was not the only direct benefit. For with the passage of time, quality bullion not only facilitated trade, it also made possible the application of countervailing monetary policies to remedy adverse economic trends.

Precious Metals Bullion as an Early Form of Currency

While multitudes of civilizations have productively employed money since the dawn of written history, none has used it more effectively than did the early medieval Muslims in its many, varied roles and applications. Indeed, because of their intrinsic values, *precious metals* – gold and silver – throughout the Middle Ages were their prime value denominators as well as their basic monetary standard, as their reverence for these twin metals as gauges of wealth and prosperity was immense. One cannot long read the contributions of contemporary Arab chroniclers without perceiving that extreme reverence. The early 4th/10th century Yemenī geographer al-Hamdānī, for instance, titles his seminal work on early medieval mining and money: *The Book of the Two Enduring*

[15] Ibn Saᶜd n.d.: 3, 213; Ibn al-Athīr 1985: 2, 290.

[16] See Heck 2003: 55–8.

Liquid Gemstones: the Yellow and the White.[17] The noted 6th/12th century Syrian commercial and economic theoretician Abū al-Faḍl al-Dimashqī also lauds the intrinsic values of these "two unique precious metals" – and their indispensable defining role in the denomination of wealth.[18] The contemporary philosopher al-Jāḥiz., in turn, contends: "Gold is loved in ingots or otherwise ... gold is precious because it never changes, because its luster and beauty increase as it ages. ... The best dīnārs are the older ones of greenish red. It is said that the best gold is native and the best silver is virgin."[19] Ibn Khaldūn likewise contributes: "God created two minerals, gold and silver, as a measure of value for all capital accumulations. ... Even if under certain circumstances, other things are acquired, this is solely for the purpose of obtaining (gold and silver). All other commodities are subject to market fluctuations, from which (gold and silver) are exempt. They are the very basis of profit, property, and treasure."[20] The *Qur'ān* itself asserts: "Fair in the eyes of men is the love of the things that they covet: women and sons, heaped up hoards of gold and silver" (*Sūrat Āl ᶜImrān, Āya 14*). Thus was the early medieval Muslims' respect for precious metals as a currency denominator – a phenomenon that traced its provenance to their sustained development and exploitation of them in the 6th/9th century Ḥijāz. So committed were they in their esteem for gold and silver, in fact, that the pursuit of "*alchemy*" would ultimately become a highly obsessive scientific discipline amongst medieval Muslim savants – all in the quest to expand their sources of precious-metals-denominated wealth further still. It is no surprise, then, that the medieval Muslims turned to gold and silver as the prime components of their initial currency, or that at the onset of Islam, the soon-to-be Prophet Muḥammad and his mercantile colleagues were transacting trade employing precious metal bullion – as well as then circulating Byzantine gold and Sāsānid silver coins as their currency base. Al-Balādhurī states: The people of Makka received the dīnārs of Heraclius and the Persian Baghlī dirham in the pre-Islamic Age. (But internally) they did not transact except in bullion. The Quraysh weighed silver with a weight called a dirham, and they weighed gold with a weight called a dīnār, and each ten dirham weights equaled seven dīnār weights.[21]

Al-Maqrīzī similarly asserts that except for the incoming Byzantine gold dīnārs and Sāsānid silver dirhams: "The currency of the Arabs that circulated within the pre-Islamic era was gold and silver ... and the weights of the dirhams and the dīnārs in the pre-Islamic period were as they were in Islam":[22] whereas Ibn Khaldūn appends: "The (pre-Islamic) Arabs transacted their commerce in gold and silver by weight."[23]

A prime source of the early medieval Muslims' precious metals bullion currency was demonstrably provable *indigenously-produced* precious metals, a reality that has

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17 Al-Hamdānī 1987. *Kitāb al-Jawharatayn al-ᶜAtīqatayn al-Mā'iᶜatayn: al-Ṣafrā' wa al-Bayḍā.*, passim.

18 Al-Dimashqī 1977: 22–3.

19 Al-Jāḥiz. 1966: 14–15.

20 Ibn Khaldūn n.d.: 381.

21 Al-Balādhurī 1978: 452.

22 Al-Maqrīzī 1967: 3, 4.

23 Ibn Khaldūn 1978: 227.

nonetheless occasioned no small amount of controversy within recent Near East historiography. Patricia Crone, as supported by F.E. Peters, asserts, for instance, the striking notion that precious metals played no economically significant role whatsoever within contemporary Ḥijāzī commerce: "The Meccans cannot be said to have exported gold and silver at all. … Meccan trade thus cannot be identified as a trade in gold."[24] F.E. Peters takes the argument further still.

There are, in fact, no external indications that Mecca was prosperous or even that there was any real capital to invest . … The absence of gold and silver currency is somewhat startling, but only because we assume that the city existed on a "monetary economy," which it almost certainly did not. Two conclusions immediately present themselves in consequence: first, that Mecca was not significantly involved in international trade … and second, whatever business the Quraysh were conducting, it had to perforce be, and appears to have been, quite literally barter.[25]

But as subsequent analysis will demonstrate, here both scholars clearly can be challenged. For a careful reading of the medieval Arab geographers leaves little doubt that at the rise of Islam, 7th-century Arabia's Western Province analogue to its 21st-century Eastern Province abundance of *liquid minerals* was "*hard minerals*" – precious metals. Elsewhere, the prominent role of Ḥijāzī gold and silver mining in driving the operating economic dynamic of the early Islamic state has been well documented. Their industrial and commercial contributions cannot be underestimated. For when they are factored into the contemporary industrial equation, a quite different economy emerges.[26] Indeed, the combination of source documentation and residual onsite physical evidence makes readily apparent that one cannot begin to comprehend the functioning of the early medieval Ḥijāzī economy without first perceiving the indispensable role of precious metals. For mining created a variety of production, refining, and distribution jobs at over 1000 separate sites. Jewelry-making further contributed to the expansion of the local employment base. Gold, silver, copper, and iron were also inputs in other industrial production. Such precious metals were concurrently investment capital that underwrote production. Equally significantly, they lubricated commerce, serving as its currency base – financing import acquisitions as well as "import substitution" indigenous industrial development. They were, in fact, "capital looking for a place to happen." Accordingly, the medieval Arab chroniclers relate, that at their deaths, the estates of al-Zubayr and ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b.ᶜAwf contained the monetary equivalents of 50,000 and 84,000 gold coins respectively; whereas upon the assassination of Caliph ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān, he reportedly possessed 100,000 gold coins and one million silver coins.[27]

Yet here, a clarification of the role of precious metals in shaping trade is crucial. For Dr. Crone may well be right, at least in part, when she asserts that the early Makkans did

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24 Crone 1987: 87–95, passim, pp. 87 and 95 quoted; Peters 1988: 6.

25 Peters 1988: 6.

26 See Heck. 1999: 363ff. It is critical to bear in mind, however, that while analysis focuses upon the Ḥijāz and west central Najd, there likewise are then contemporary reports of medieval mining in what is now modern Yemen, Oman, and elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula.

27 Lewis 1970: 221–2.

not export vast amounts of gold and silver to anywhere *per se*; although, in an early age of bulk bullion monetary transactions, the linguistic distinction between gold "exported" in exchange for other goods, and gold used as "currency" to purchase other goods and services, may not be that commercially significant.[28] For what foreign recipients of such metals ultimately did with them is not overly germane to the basic nature of the trade of the Ḥijāzīs. Makkan merchants unquestionably did carry substantial quantities of bullion on sundry international trading caravans, whether for export or transactional purposes. Responding to specific concerns that they reportedly carried gold and silver *both to and from* Syria, however, the sources make quite clear that it was the latter function – for use as currency payments for commodities – that was more common.

Ibn Isḥāq explicitly explains, in fact, that the precious metals seized by the Muslims in their various raids on caravans were intended for use as coin. When the Muslims won silver as booty in their raid at al-ᶜĪs. in 8/630, it was trade investment capital that they were plundering. Al-Wāqidī's report that al-Ḥārith b. ᶜĀmir b. Nawfal had 1000 *mithqāls*, Umayya b. Khalaf 1000 *mithqāls*, members of the banū ᶜAbd Manāf 15,000 *mithqāls,* and the banū Makhzūm 5000 *mithqāls* of gold invested in one of Abū Sufyān's periodic northbound Syrian caravans also clarifies that it was being carried as bullion to be used as currency to underwrite commerce.[29]

Abū Baqā', in turn, claims that it was the common use of bullion in monetary transactions that caused a Syrian customs agent to query ᶜUmār b. al-Khaṭṭāb in some astonishment: "A Qurashī caravan coming to Syria without gold? That isn't possible!" In contending that gold was the driving force behind their commerce, he adds that the Ghassānids would customarily relieve Makkan merchants of portions of it in "transit fees" when Ḥijāzī caravans passed through their territories.[30] Most important for an accurate understanding of the underlying economic dynamic of contemporary West Arabia, then, is the reality that precious metals were equally the prevailing currency and the prevailing currency denominator. Early Ḥijāzī mining proceeds undeniably created quality jobs and incomes, many marketable products, and all of the stimulative economic multiplier effects that are normally attendant thereto. But it was in their contemporary use as "money" that precious metals made their greatest impact.

There were other proximate currencies percolating throughout the Near East in pre-Islamic times, to be sure – including the Byzantine gold dīnār used in Syria and Egypt and the Persian silver dirham employed in what is now modern Iraq and Iran – as the Arab caravan traders and foreign merchants would transact in them and bring some of them back with them to the Ḥijāz in their international trading missions. Conversely, contemporary foreign merchants visiting West Arabia would bring such monies into the region to pay for their purchases of goods and services.

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28 Crone 1987: 87–95 passim, and p. 90 in particular.

29 See al-Wāqidī 1965: 1, 27 ff.; Ibn Saᶜd n.d.: 2: 36; idem. 3: 45; Ibn Ḥanbal 1895: 3, 271; al-Ṭabarī 1879: 1, 1374–5; al-Zubayr b. Bakkār 1996: 498; Ibn Hishām 1955: 364; al-Balādhurī 1959: 1, 374 ff, 377, 398 ff.; al-Muqaddasī 1906: 101–2; Ibn Isḥāq 1976, no. 500; Ibn al-Athīr 1985: 2, 145–6.

30 Abū Baqā' Hibatallāh 1984: 1, 67.

Hence, they were commonly known and well-established within the local marketplace. Indeed, the *Qur'ān* explicitly refers to both the dīnār[31] and the dirham,[32] – and it was the specific weights of such foreign currencies that were the denominational basis for determining, by proxy, the value of the Ḥijāzīs' precious metal bullion used in countertrade. Thus, medieval Arab chroniclers commonly describe early Muslim commercial transactions in dīnār and dirham terms – employing them as "*numeraires*," monetary benchmarks corresponding to specific common bullion weights, even though there were very few "Arabic" coins struck in the first half century of Islam.

Accordingly, by the time of the accession of the Umayyad caliphate in 40/661, the earliest Muslims had enjoyed a lengthy legacy in the production of, and subsequent transaction in, precious metals bullion. Reflecting this practice, the dīnār equivalent bullion weights were commonly called "*al-ᶜayn,*" whereas dirham equivalent bullion weights were correspondingly called "*al-waraq*," to wit: in-kind, "paper" taxonomies.

For irrespective of the provenance of any particular currency denominator, it was precious metals in their raw *uncast* state that was the preponderant transactional practice. By way of example, the *qinṭār* was a bullion coin weight equivalent to 4000 dīnārs. Al-Balādhurī explicitly attests to the widespread operation of this bulk bullion trading practice, asserting that internally they transacted only "*bil-tibr*"[33] a claim affirmed by al-Maqrīzī[34] and Ibn Saᶜd.[35] Indeed, it was the supreme quality of this precious metals bullion that later would enable the Islamic caliphate to create an official minted currency of unquestioned quality within international markets.

In sum, indigenously-produced Ḥijāzī gold and silver were the key "capital bridge" that compensated for commodity trade deficits – making acquisitions possible that were not directly attainable through barter – and because of them, values of commodity exports did not, of necessity, have to equal the values of product imports. A review of the extant evidence is illuminating. For standing in compelling confirmation that the medieval Arab chroniclers' claims of abundant precious metals wealth were not apocryphal, there remains a wealth of physical testimony documenting their provenance. Indeed, today, as noted, a multitude of early medieval Ḥijāzī-west central Najdī mining locations are known, and some are even being re-opened for production.

Several sites merit particular attention. Among them, the vast productivity of "al-Minḍaḥ" mine is lauded in pre-Islamic poetry; and several others – among them Mahd al-Dhahab; al-Nuqra, Baḥrān, and Birām – are directly linked by medieval Arabic

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31 *Qur'ān* 3: 75.

32 *Qur'ān* 12: 20.

33 Al-Balādhurī 1978: 452. Al-Baldhurī states that while in the pre-Islamic era, Byzantine dīnārs and Persian dirhams did reach the people of Makka, they traded only with one another using metals bullion: *la yatabāyiᶜūn ilā ᶜalā innahā tibr.*

34 Al-Maqrīzī 1967: 4. Al-Maqrīzī indicates that in the pre-Islamic era: "*innamā kānat tataᶜāmulu bil-mathāqīl wazn al-darāhim (wa) wazn al-danānīr*."

35 Ibn Saᶜd 1904: 2, 25. Ibn Saᶜd further contributes that the early medieval West Arabian merchants typically made 100 percent returns on their investments: "*kānū yarbaḥūm fī tijarātihim li'l-dīnār dīnāran.*"

historical geographies to contemporary economic activities of Prophet Muḥammad's Quraysh tribe; whereas many others of the more than a thousand sites in West Arabia mined in the early Middle Ages, whose residual evidence remains, were likely also active in his era. Indeed, C14 datings from wood residuals at the smelters that supported these mining operations suggest that many of these activities dated to the pre-Islamic age and the earliest decades of Islam.[36]

The financing of these early medieval Arabian mining operations appears to have been a hybrid "individual/corporate" system wherein private capital was employed. The purchase of a mine by ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz and the collective ownership of the principal Banū Sulaym mine, Mahd al-Dhahab, operating in the caliphal reign of ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, are described in the primary sources. Al-Balādhurī relates that at the onset of Islam, "tax-farming" of state mining properties – whereby mines would be consigned to private interests in exchange for advance payment of the *zakāt'* or alternately, the *khums* levy – also was prevalent. Indeed, both he and al-Bakrī cite various mining properties that were tax farmed as *iqṭāᶜāt* by Prophet Muḥammad to local entrepreneurs.[37] Private exploration and discovery similarly appear to have played key roles in the mine ownership process. Ibn Ḥajar quotes members of the Banū Lihb as asserting: "We brought the 'Prophet of God' ore from al-ᶜAqīq, and he wrote us a letter stating: 'Whoever finds something, it is his – and the twenty percent tax ("*khums*") is to be levied on precious metals.'" Given the abundance of privately-owned medieval mining properties documented in the early Islamic sources whose physical evidence remains, therefore, it is clear that precious metals production was a key private sector industry in Prophet Muḥammad's era.[38]

At present, a number of these historic mines are under active development. Operations at the famed 'maᶜdin banū Sulaym,' "Mahd al-Dhahab," for instance, commenced in 1988. This site is estimated to contain 1.1 million tons of ore and is currently producing 120,000 ounces of gold, 300,000 ounces of silver, and 900 tons of copper per year. The S.ukhaybarāt mine, in turn, situated 187 miles east of al-Madīna near the historic Arabian commercial and pilgrimage route to al-Baṣra, commenced operations in 1991. Its ore reserves are estimated at 8.4 million tons – and its yearly output exceeds 50,000 ounces of gold. Indeed, between them, these twin mines are producing over nine tons of gold

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36 Al-Ḥāzimī 1995: 2, 862–3; Miles 1948, 3: 102; Casanova 1920: 24–33, passim; al-Rāshid 1980: 128; Shammā 1976: 7, 106–9. Indeed, indicative of the provenance of early Makkan gold, in a slightly later era, currency minting operations also may have taken place using the ore yields of these sites – as there are numerous early Islamic coins whose metal content is directly linked to the bullion mined in western Arabia. An Umayyad gold dīnār dating to the year 105/724, for instance, includes the phrase "mine of the Commander of the Faithful in the Ḥijāz." Numerous copper *fulūs* have likewise been discovered that bear similar inscriptions.

37 Al-Balādhurī 1978: 22–7; al-Bakrī 1983: 28–9.With clear source evidence of the widespread use of the "*qirāḍ*'/'*muḍāraba*'/'*mushārika*" investment contract in pre-Islamic times, and with Prophet Muḥammad's ancestors documented in its use, it is likely that this contract was employed in such investments.

38 Ibn Ḥajar 1910: 4, 196.

annually. Two other historic mines, al-ᶜAmār and al-Ḥajar, both possessing prodigious gold-content-assayed core sampling yields, also are under active development – with the output from the latter, by itself, projected to add another 1.5 tons to Saudi Arabia's yearly gold production.[39]

Many of these mining areas clearly were "big business" in early medieval times as well. Source evidence and remnants of on-site barrack-like structures indicate that they were often labor-intensive – employing as many as 2000 men. Production volumes likewise appear to have been impressive – as core sampling evidence suggests that an estimated 1,500,000 ounces of gold were produced from the more than one million tons of ore mined at Mahd al-Dhahab in historic times; and that more than 1,000,000 ounces of gold were produced at al-Ḥamḍa in the early medieval era as well. These are, as noted, but two of the many geographic locations wherein mining appears to have taken place in the Ḥijāz in the early Middle Ages – and represent significant findings when evaluating the economic stimuli that drove contemporary investment and trade.[40]

Thus, in the early medieval Ḥijāz, there can be little doubt that gold and silver reigned preeminent. They were, in fact, the key determinants that distinguished the relatively wealthy Makkan economy from those of its early medieval Near East counterparts. To take these valued commodities out of the contemporary West Arabian market scene, therefore, would, without doubt, produce the same economically vacuous results as if oil were to be deleted from modern Saudi Arabia's export data – as to project the *full* economic picture, precious metals, predominant components of both local industry and commerce, must perforce be factored in. Yet credit precious metals with their proper role in driving the operating economic dynamic of the 1st/7th-century Ḥijāz, and the remaining dimensions of the contemporary commercial and industrial picture – based upon the longstanding testimony of medieval Arab chroniclers – fall readily into place.

This long prevailing practice of transacting in precious metals, however, would soon be dramatically changed by the creative monetary policies of the earliest Muslim rulers. For though Prophet Muḥammad initially perpetuated pre-Islamic financial practice, his caliphal successors, over time, gradually imposed a distinct Islamic imprimatur on the prevailing currency – which culminated in the monumental monetary reforms of Caliph ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Marwān commencing in 73/692 – establishing a qualitatively premier, epigraphically pure Islamic currency – and with it, ushering in a new era in the commercial and financial history of the Near East. A comparison of chronicled testimony with the residual numismatic evidence documenting these developments in this era is illuminating.

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39 Goldsmith 1971, Bulletin No. 5: 26 ff.; Naval Intelligence Division 1946: 517; *Arab News* (Jiddah, September 11, 2001), p. 2; *Arab News* (Jidda, May 3, 2001), p. 2; *Arab News* (Jidda: February 19, 1990), p. 2; *Arab News* (Jidda, December 5, 1996), p. 2; *Arab News* (Jidda, August 2, 1996), p. 2; *Arab News* (Jidda, January 16, 1997), p. 2, *Arab News* (Jidda, May 27, 1998), p. 2; *Arab News* (Jidda, February 3, 2001), p. 2; 'Saudi Arabia Ministry Petroleum and Mineral Resources' in-house geological maps.

40 Simon 1989: 22 ff.; Ibrahim 1990: 32 ff., 42–52, passim; Peters 1988: 47 ff.

The Evolution of Islamic Monetary Policy: the Monetary Message from the Medieval Muslim Sources

Coins, within the medieval Islamic chronicles, are the reverse mirror image of precious metals in that the sources occasionally speak of currency issues for which there are no surviving specimens. This is a phenomenon that perplexes many modern numismatists. But unlike mining, which offers both documentary references and corroborating residual artifacts, in the case of coins, the sources provide documentary testimony as to the actuality of certain currency issues together with explicit explanations for the *absence of* tangible coin specimens. Set within the context of contemporary commercial flows, their rationales are both cogent and compelling.

The burgeoning trade of the young, rapidly expanding Islamic empire quite obviously occasioned a demand for vast quantities of quality money to facilitate widespread commercial transactions. Immediately prior to the rise of Islam, as noted, the historic Arab lands had frequently been subjected to foreign domination – particularly that of Byzantium over Syria, Egypt, and North Africa, and at times, Yemen, by means of its Abyssinian proxy – as well as that of Persia over Iraq, and also, at times, directly over Yemen and elsewhere. Even on the Arabian Peninsula itself, this proxy influence was powerfully manifest through the Byzantines' prime commercial surrogates, the Ghassānids, who operated in its northwest from al-Jābīya, near Damascus; and the Persians' surrogate, the Lakhmids, who similarly occupied its northeast quadrant from al-Ḥīra, near al-Kūfa.

Indeed, Prophet Muḥammad's own tribe, the Quraysh, dominant in Makka, were directly trading in these regions – reportedly conducting formal winter caravans to Syria in the summer and to Yemen in the winter – as well as dispatching frequent *ad interim* caravans elsewhere to places such as Iraq, Persia, Egypt, and even Abyssinia – and had likewise inked trade pacts with tribes operating in the sundry "proxy states" to conduct short-range commerce whose proceeds was often requited in sundry regionally circulating currencies, including bulk bullion.[41]

It thus comes as no surprise that the political divisions that prevailed in the Near East were paralleled in its monetary systems – to wit, that commercial exchange in West Arabia at the rise of Islam was primarily transacted in bulk precious metals-denominated coin weight equivalents of Byzantine gold ("*solidus/ nomisma/denarius*") currency brought in by the caravans from Syria and Egypt and Sāsānid ("*dirham*" from the Greek "*drachma*") silver currency brought from Iraq and Persia for employment in the Ḥijāzī markets. In this era within the region, of course, there were no prevailing notions of the late medieval concept of "*currency territorial sovereignty*" that would later prevail in Christian Europe. Byzantine coins were accepted in major Sāsānid markets and conversely – and in the other proximate markets, their weight equivalents were the prime denominators for bulk bullion trade exchanges. Because the weights and volumes of the currencies then in circulation were directly linked to incipient demand for bullion,

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41 *Qur'ān* 106: 2.

a cursory review of the Ḥijāzī regional monetary system that evolved in Islam's first half dynamic century, as related by the sources, at this point, is insightful.[42]

For the fiscal structure sanctioned by Prophet Muḥammad clearly was no accident – as the *Dār al-Islām*, from its inception, was compelled to operate a monetary economy for a number of crucial reasons. Many related to the establishment of several uniquely Islamic institutions, such as its public welfare delivery systems and its various currency-driven tax levies. The "*ᶜaṭā*" pension program, for instance, was allocated to select Muslims on a "cash basis" in annual amounts ranging from 200 to 12,000 dirhams – thereby generating a concomitant need for appropriate currency denominations to distribute the welfare stipends.[43]

Indeed, even various terms of surrender and tax systems imposed by the Muslim conquerors upon subjugated provinces were levied in foreign currency units that reflected the prevailing local monetary systems. Al-Balādhurī and al-Maqrīzī make clear, for instance, that Prophet Muḥammad relied upon a "currency denominator" to levy the wealth-based tax, *al-zakāt*, as well as the poll tax, *al-jizya*. For this reason, they explain, he explicitly sanctioned a system of currency weights and exchange rates in the newly established Islamic economic system based on ratios previously fixed by Makkan merchants for the circulating Byzantine and Sāsānid currencies.[44]

This was a key financial consideration. For in Egypt, for example, the "Treaty of Alexandria," imposed upon that country's subjugation by its Arab conquerors in 21/642, required that all non-Muslims (*dhimmīs*) pay an annual four dīnār poll tax (*jizyah*) to the Muslim *fiscus* – and the Egyptian land tax (*kharāj*) likewise often was remitted in cash in lieu of kind. *Dhimmīs* in other territories of the *Dār al-Islām* who surrendered peacefully to the Arab conquerors were also subjected to yearly *jizya* cash payments. These levies, and sundry other taxation impositions, thus practically mandated a highly liquid monetary economy for the nascent Islamic empire right from its inception. For in addition to its barter and circulating foreign currencies, its legal system early on invoked a need to contemplate a corresponding monetary one.[45]

Accordingly, according to the sources, the nascent Islamic government's monetary policies initially consisted of leaving in place the indigenous weights and monetary systems – to wit, those of the Byzantium and Persia – prevailing at the time of a territory's conquest. For this reason, Prophet Muḥammad is credited in early traditions with "having left to Iraq its *qafīz* and its dirham; to Syria, its *mudd* and its dīnār; and to Egypt, its *ardabb* and its dīnār."[46]

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42 Some Yemeni Ḥimyaritic silver currency likewise reportedly circulated in local and regional markets at this time. It must concurrently be noted that the there is residual tangible evidence that Byzantium experimented with silver currency issues and the Sāsānids with gold ones. For minor change transactions, both superpowers also issued copper coinage.

43 Al-Balādhurī 1987: 629 ff.

44 Al-Balādhurī 1987: 651 ff.; al-Maqrīzī 1967: 4–6, 13; 1957: 48.

45 Al-Maqrīzī 1967: 21–3. Under Caliph ᶜUmar I, both the levying and allocation of public tax revenues were entrusted to a newly consolidated financial institution, the "*dīwān*."

46 Al-Maqrīzī 1957: 62–3.

But in transacting business within the Byzantine/Sāsānid "currency-denominated" capital systems, as noted, the method of money exchange established by Prophet Muḥammad was calculated not by coin volumes but by weight. Complicating the transaction process was the reality that while the Byzantine gold dīnārs were generally uniform in weight at 4.55 grams, Sāsānid-styled silver dirhams were not only less precisely struck, but likewise came in three primary sizes: 20 *qīrāṭ*, 12 *qīrāṭ*, and 10 *qīrāṭ*. Because it was the specific weights, and not the relative numbers of the coins employed, that were germane in a given transaction, contemporary Arabs called the dīnārs "*al-tibr*" or "*al-ᶜayn*" and the dirhams "*al-waraq*" – signifying that it was their "in-kind" unstruck weights ("*ᶜaynan*") that determined their unitary values.[47]

These sundry "base weights," the sources indicate, were directly applicable in the process of converting precious metals bullion into hard currency equivalents – as already in pre-Islamic times, explicit ratios had been established relating the weights of the dīnārs and dirhams then in circulation to the foundational base weight unit, the *mithqāl*. Foremost among them, the weight of the dīnār was established at one *mithqāl* of gold; whereas the weight of the standard dirham was fixed at one *mithqāl* of silver, with the smaller dirhams proportionately reduced.[48]

To wit, ten dirhams of standard size equaled ten silver *mithqāls*; ten dirhams of medium size equaled seven (or six) *mithqāls*; and ten dirhams of the smallest size equaled five *mithqāls*. The fixed exchange rate between the dīnār and dirham, in turn, depending upon the authority consulted, is said to have been set at either ten or 12 to one, thereby enabling more precisely differentiated currency calculations.[49]

These various pre-Islamic "monetary ratios," as indicated, were, at the onset, perpetuated by Prophet Muḥammad, and by his immediate successor, Caliph Abū Bakr, as a basis for their own fiscal calculations. Not long after the Prophet's death, however, there appeared reports of sporadic attempts to produce a more indigenous Islamic currency fit to these taxonomic prescriptions. These initial issues consisted of copper and silver coins with certain Islamic inscriptions overstruck at newly conquered mints onto prototypes of the Byzantine and the Sāsānid currencies then floating in the marketplace.[50] Because the meager sizes of such paltry issues as were produced did not change the basic *volume* of currency in circulation, however – only its superficial epigraphy – it is obvious that the real significance of this monetary reform was politically symbolic, and not primarily economic. Source evidence and surviving coin specimens likewise suggest that serious attempts at the issuance of the earliest quasi-"Islamic currency" came gradually, and in ascending order of value – at first, copper *fulūs* – then silver *dirhams* – and finally, gold *dīnārs*.

Accordingly, if both al-Balādhurī and al-Maqrīzī are to be believed, whereas Abū Bakr al-Ṣadīq merely ratified and perpetuated the practice of transacting in Byzantine and Sāsānid currency that Prophet Muḥammad had instituted, the first caliph to actually

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47 Al-Balādhurī 1987: 651 ff.; al-Maqrīzī 1967: 3–6; 1957: 48 ff.

48 Al-Balādhurī 1987: 651 ff.; al-Maqrīzī 1967: 3–6; 1957: 48 ff.

49 Sources cited in the preceding footnote.

50 *Ibid*.

attempt a quasi-"arabized" currency in the quest to establish a fully independent Islamic sovereign identity was ᶜUmar b. al- Khaṭṭāb (r. 13/634–23/644) who, in the years 17/638 to 20/641, ordered assessing the *jizyah* poll tax on the subjugated people of the western provinces of the *Dār al-Islām* in Byzantine currency terms and on those in the eastern provinces in Persian currency terms – and took to issuing copper coinage (*fulūs*) predicated upon the then prevalent Byzantine model for circulation in the west, and silver coinage (*dirhams*) based upon the Sāsānid prototype for circulation in the east, some even carrying his own overstruck name – a practice perpetuated by his successor caliphs.[61]Based on this formula, in terms of *copper* currency, *fulūs*, a surviving specimen suggests that Caliph ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb produced his earliest issue modeled after the Byzantine copper coinage of Emperor Heraclius, bearing not only that ruler's image but concurrently the Muslim caliph's name commencing in 17/638 in Qinnasrīn. At times, a specific place of minting, *Dimashq*, *Ḥalab*, *Ḥimṣ*, *Ṭabarīya*, *Filasṭīn*, *Qinnasrīn*, *al-Iskandarīya*, etc., would appear on such issues overstruck in Arabic.[51]

Based on this formula also, silver coins were patterned after those of the Sāsānids with basic epigraphy in standard Pahlevi script, but with such religious inscriptions overlaid in Arabic script as "There is no God save Allāh alone": "Allāh be praised": "Allāh is the Greatest": "Muḥammad is the Prophet of Allāh": "In the Name of God": and "ᶜUmar." These coins – directly modeled after the "al-Khusrawīya" (= Chosroes/Khusraw) Sāsānid prototypes – were struck at various mints, among them those in Sijistān, al-Rayy, and Marū in the 20/641–21/642 period.[52]

Terms indicating that the coins fully subscribed to legal weight and quality standards – such as *tayyib* (good), *jā'iz* (valid), and *wāfī* (compliant) – as well as the phrase "In the name of God" would also frequently be engraved upon the issues. Such monies, though quite small in relative value, were, in fact, a prime medium of exchange for the purchase of such basic necessities as foodstuffs and personal and household items. One interesting result of the marketplace introduction of the new Islamic currency reportedly pioneered by Caliph ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, if true, is that in the year 18/639, concurrent with his epigraphic monetary reforms, he appears to have fixed a uniform weight standard for the dirham. For though not explicitly attributing the specific change to Caliph ᶜUmar I, al-Balādhurī states that the prevailing ratio was at that time established at ten dirhams to seven silver mithqāls. Al-Maqrīzī, however, believes that the ratio fixed was ten dirhams to six mithqāls – and that the 10:7 ratio was not established until the reforms of ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Marwān.[53]

Notwithstanding, if the standardization of silver currencies circulating in the Near East that occurred soon after the rise of Islam is properly attributable to Caliph ᶜUmar I, as al-Balādhurī suggests, then his initiative appears to have represented the first serious attempt by a Muslim ruler to unify the various monetary units transacted in internal and proximate international markets. Efforts to assess the "economic multiplier effects" of ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's posited new monetary policies, though impossible to capture

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51 Al-Maqrīzī 1967: 7–8, 61–2; 1957: 51–2; al-Balādhurī 1987: 652 ff.; Fahmī 1957: 37.

52 For examples of such coinage, see *Mu'assat al-Naqd al-ᶜArabī al-Saᶜūdī* n.d.: 37–40.

53 Al-Balādhurī 1987: 652 ff.; al-Maqrīzī 1967: 7–8; 1957: 51–2.

in their fullest at this late date, nonetheless do present an interesting arbitrage basis for speculating on that caliph's specific fiscal intent. For if al-Maqrīzī is indeed correct in his assertion that he had reduced the standard weight of the dirham from 10:10 to 10:6, for instance, this new ratio implied a 40 percent reduction of the actual silver supplies needed to meet ongoing coinage requirements; or alternately, the ability to produce for circulation 40 percent more coinage from a fixed amount of silver. If the latter possibility was, in fact, the case – that Caliph ᶜUmar I was now seeking to put more currency into circulation in a deliberate attempt to increase money supply – as al-Maqrīzī also suggests – then the resulting monetary stimulus may well have been a prime financial factor contributing to the extremely rapid economic expansion that attended the rise of the *Dār al-Islām*. Though this latter possibility is mere conjecture, however, there can be no lingering doubt that the close linkages between the precious metals-denominated monetary supply and economic activity – and the critical role of high grade precious metals bullion in assuring currency quality – all were well understood and carefully applied by early medieval Muslim rulers.[54]

Similar attempts documented by the sources aimed at striking a reformed Islamic coinage were reportedly undertaken by the orthodox caliphs ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān (d. 35/656) and ᶜAlī b. Ābī Ṭālib (d. 40/661); by the latter's immediate successor, the first Umayyad Caliph, Muᶜāwiyah b. ᶜAbī Sufyān (d. 60/680); as well as by the caliphal pretender ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr (d. 73/692) and his brother, Muṣᶜab b. al-Zubayr (d. 72/691), who ruled the Ḥijāz and parts of Iraq from Makka for over a dozen years in the 61/680–73/692 period.[55]

The currency reforms of Muᶜāwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41/661–60/680) – first in the lineage of Umayyad caliphs – are said by the sources to have been the most significant of the new issues, and are reported to have resulted in dirhams modeled after the late Sāsānid prototypes as well as *dīnārs* which were struck primarily in Damascus epigraphically patterned after Byzantine prototypes, not only adding the conventional Islamic prescriptions, but, according to al-Maqrīzī, also substituting the name and image of the caliph brandishing his sword for the previous prototype of a *basileus* bearing a cross, yet with the name of the city of minting nonetheless still engraved in Greek.[56]

Al-Maqrīzī concurrently indicates, however, that early on, there were serious contemporary Islamic religious objections to the placement of the likeness of what appears to be a caliphal figure bearing a sword on Muᶜawīya's new coinage, even though it replaced a similar depiction of his counterpart, the Byzantine emperor, and that this

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54 Al-Maqrīzī, citing an explanation of ᶜUmar's monetary policy made by Ziyād b. Abīhi to Umayyad Caliph Muᶜāwiya (1967: 8; 1957: 52), indicates that this was indeed a deliberate monetary stimulus injected into the economy to benefit the masses, presumably by significantly boosting consumer purchasing power, while nonetheless, at the same time, serving to the great detriment of the state fiscus as well as prevailing military wages.

55 Al-Maqrīzī 1967: 8–10, 62–5; 1957: 52–3; al-Balādhurī 1987: 652 ff.

56 Cf. al-Maqrīzī 1967: 9. If real, there is no evidence that any of these early Islamic coins have survived, possibly because, as reported, they were smelted down in subsequent currency reforms.

factor may have resulted in diminished production, or even deliberate destruction, of this new currency issue.[57] In any event, transcending mere denial of their existence, quite substantive technical issues to be momentarily addressed could equally explain the reality that none of these coins have survived. Irrespective of the veracity of accounts of Muᶜāwīya's reported experimentation in issuing "arabized" gold dīnārs, however, what is incontestably clear is that he, as well as the Zubayrī brothers, did issue silver dirhams patterned after the Arab-Sāsānid model pioneered by their predecessors, the orthodox caliphs ᶜUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, ᶜUthmān b. ᶜAffān, and ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.[58]

Muᶜāwiya's currency reforms were reportedly perpetuated, in turn, with only slight modification, by his son and successor Yazīd b. Muᶜāwiya (r. 60/680–64/683) who, at times, also added the phrase to the official Islamic coinage – "Allāh and the Supplication of My Lord." But though he and two immediate Umayyad caliphal successors who ruled in the five years following the deaths of Muᶜāwiya, Muᶜāwiya II and Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, seemingly produced no other truly significant currency innovations, the evolutionary process of producing an ever more sophisticated Islamic currency continued to proceed gradually until the aforesaid monumental monetary reforms of ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Marwān late in the 1st/7th century. These, then, are basic claims of the medieval Islamic sources regarding the evolution of the earliest Islamic coinage. It is to a consideration of how these claims comport with the evidence presented by surviving coin specimens that inquiry now turns.

The Evolution of Islamic Monetary Policy: Reconciling Primary Source Variances with Existing Coin Evidence

The reliability of medieval Islamic sources in conveying economic information, as indicated, has been questioned by many eminently qualified orientalists and numismatists. Issues in contention include seemingly flawed early Muslim minting practices both in dating and in the use of dies; imagery, and that particularly related to depictions on the coins of the human form; and a paucity of pre-reform Umayyad coinage, especially dīnārs, leading some numismatists to doubt whether certain coin issues reported by the sources ever, in fact, took place.

Much of the problem inherent centers around what R.B. Serjeant has called "negative evidence argumentation" – the rationale that the absence of compelling tangible evidence, *ipso facto*, means that a particular activity did not take place – an approach, however, that, failing to consider the operational context within which a particular event evolved, can lead to spurious conclusions.[59] Reconciling the nature of the epigraphy of early Islamic coinage is beyond the scope of this chapter and the competence of its author – save for the observations (i) that the earliest Islamic coinage was produced

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[57] Al-Maqrīzī 1967: 9. There is, as noted, considerable orientalist numismatist controversy as to whether this particular issue ever actually took place.

[58] Ibidem.

[59] Cf. Walker 1941, 1956; Foss 2001, 2002, 2004; Album and Goodwin 2002, all passim.

by inexperienced Arab mining operators at preexisting Byzantine and Sāsānid mints, a reality that may explain the technical disparities in production identified by modern numismatists; (ii) the problem of imagery regarding depiction of the human form may well be addressed by the passage of al-Maqrīzī relating religious objections to replicating caliphal images on the coinage; and (iii) that some *lacunae* in the evidence presented by the aggregate of surviving coin specimens likewise may be explained by factors other than summary conclusions that the sources themselves were outright wrong in their contentions. Among them, while the reality is that none of these reported gold dīnār issues of Muᶜāwiya (nor others reportedly struck by Muṣᶜab b. al-Zubayr) have survived may suggest that al-Maqrīzī is, in fact, in error, this phenomenon may alternately be attributable to the possibility that Muᶜāwiya's coins, as well as those of many of his predecessors and successors – together with much of the Byzantine gold and Sāsānid silver money then in circulation, as well as issues of sundry erstwhile rebels then still floating within the marketplaces of the *Dār al-Islām* – were subsequently banished from circulation and mandatorily smelted down to provide bullion feedstock for the reformed Islamic coinage produced by the sweeping new currency mandates that were proclaimed by Caliph ᶜAbd al-Malik in the 73/692–79/698 period. Indeed, in this development, the 14th-century Egyptian jurist al-Damīrī unequivocally states that ᶜAbd al-Malik ordered in writing that: "The currency be struck in all of the Islamic countries and that it be issued to the masses for circulation, and that he also threatened to slay all who transacted in dirhams and dīnārs other than these, and to void the latter and return them to the mint to convert them into Islamic money."[60] If so, such a development would not have been unprecedented in the Middle Ages – as here, analogy to issues of coinage sovereignty slightly later within 8th and 9th century medieval Christian Europe – a case study wherein a documented abundance of commerce is again not fully sustained by residual currency evidence – may well be invoked.

Coins, as indicated, serve as basic barometers of volumes and extent of trade. In the instance cited, an abundance of commerce between the *Dār al-Islām* and Christian Europe is only partially supported by surviving *numismatic* evidence. Analysing a number of coin hoards found in Western Europe, for example, Maurice Lombard concludes that an Islamic *commercial supremacy* prevailed over the Mediterranean region between the 1st/7th and 5th/11th centuries – a trade hegemony that stimulated and redeveloped a regional economy which, until then, had been in decline. The Muslims paid for their imports of European slaves, timber, furs, and other raw materials, he contends, with gold dīnārs in massive quantities, thereby contributing to Europe's 5th/11th-century economic revival.[61] Lombard's currency theory has over time been subjected to no small amount of criticism by contemporary scholars. Phillip Grierson argued, for instance, that the number of coin specimens available constituted an evidence base too meager from which to draw major definitive conclusions about the course of medieval Western

60 Al-Damīrī 1954: 1, 173; Fahmī 1964: 28–9.

61 Lombard 1948: 188–99; 1947: 143 ff.

European economic history. Therefore, he concluded: "The importation of Arab gold in substantial quantities must be regarded as non-proven."[62]

Grierson's contention was subsequently supported by Jean Duplessy, who concurrently maintained that available numismatic evidence had not been properly correlated with pertinent textual evidence. But Duplessy also based his conclusions upon analysis of a relatively modest quantity of Islamic coins then available to him for scrutiny in 1956 – consisting of 241 whole and fractional (gold) dīnārs, as well as 153 whole and fractional (silver) dirhams, and one copper *fals* (singular of fulūs) coin originating from 36 western European treasure troves.[63] Today, however, the collections of currency samples evaluated by Grierson constitute a somewhat minuscule portion of the numismatic evidence available – as numerous subsequent studies have evaluated additional groupings contained in the hoards of so-called "Kufic" coins found in western Europe. Hundreds of Umayyad coins also have been found as far north as the Baltic coast, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. A single such hoard in Gotland, for instance, contained over 4000 Arab dirhams. The cumulative weight of numismatic evidence that they present thus suggests that a significant medieval East-West trade in this era did, in reality, take place.[64]

Using metrological analysis, Sture Bolin has shown, in fact, a quite remarkable correlation between the weights of the Frankish *denarius* and the Islamic *dirham* extending well over three centuries – producing findings that strongly suggest that the weight and value of the *denarius* were directly dominated by the prevalence of the superior Islamic silver coinage circulating in Western Europe throughout this period. He also demonstrates, using Islamic sources, that Muslim silver coinage was spent in Christian Europe for the purchase of eunuchs, slaves, furs, and swords. His conclusion is that, rather than shunning the *Dār al-Islām* commercially, "Carolingia" actually strove to emulate it *monetarily*.[65]

Other numismatic evidence conclusively proves, moreover, that Christian Europe, at times, imitated Islamic money *epigraphically* as well as metrologically – as it appears that so respected was Muslim currency in the region that European rulers took to emulating it to facilitate their indigenous merchants' entries into the commercial marketplace. Certain of Charlemagne's currency issues, for instance, even bore Arabic inscriptions, including a quote from the *Qur'ān*. Medieval European literature likewise abounds with references to the "*mancus*" – referring alternately to then market-prevalent Arabic dīnārs or to European imitations of them. The term is often interpreted as having derived from the Arabic "*manqūsh*," meaning to have been engraved or chiseled, from the verb "*naqasha*," to engrave or to inscribe. Research of Marc Bloch suggests that the "*mancus*" first appeared in Italy in 161/778; and soon became a prime basis for concluding official currency transactions throughout the region. So prevalent had the "*mancus*" become

62 Grierson 1979a: 1074.

63 Duplessy 1956: 119.

64 On these coin hoards, see Heck 2006: 184–5.

65 Bolin 1953: 12 ff., 20 ff.; Adelson 1962: 40–41; Hodges 1982: 8.

in the marketplace, he contends, that its exchange rate had a fixed value of 30 local "*derniers*."[66]

Hence, the weight of numismatic evidence tends to support medieval Islamic and European chronicled sources indications positing not inconsequential commerce between the *Dār al-Islām* and Western Europe in the 2nd/8th–3rd/9th century period – notwithstanding that the number of remaining coin specimens attesting to this trade is undeniably considerably less than the total of those found in the Baltic region and central Russia.

Admittedly, this is a curious numismatic phenomenon – for it is generally acknowledged that Islamic civilization was perceptibly economically and commercially superior to that of its Christian European counterpart in this 2nd/8th–3rd/9th century time frame. But though the West did not possess a broad variety of goods to market in the Islamic East, what it *did* offer was "strategic" military logistics – slaves, wood, and iron weaponry – and there was now definitely a very brisk, ongoing trade in these commodities. In this commercial context, R.S. Lopez asserts: "In all probability, early medieval Europe, with its crude society of affluent lords and penniless peasants, behaved toward the vastly more refined and complex societies of Byzantium and Islam like any other backward country does that doesn't crave for many outlandish manufactured goods and enjoys an excess of exportable raw materials. Ordinarily, the payments balance in this case is favorable to the backward country, positing a likely positive balance in favor of Europe in Carolingian-ᶜAbbāsid trade."[67]

In other words, if Lopez is correct, the preponderant flow of currency should have been from East to West and not from West to East. But such a posited money flow, as noted, is not substantiated by extant numismatic evidence. Notwithstanding, three plausible explanations, or some combination of them, may explain this phenomenon. One key hypothesis, advanced by Morrison,[68] Hodges,[69] Bolin,[70] and Bloch,[71] is that, in keeping with contemporary monetary practice, Muslim coins were melted down to either create treasure for the Church – or merely to purge their Islamic inscriptions and recast them as indigenous currency. According to this interpretation, then, all coinage entering the Carolingian domain, just as al-Damīrī claims was earlier the case within the Islamic empire, now went directly into the "melting pot."

Indeed, the dispute that took place between Caliph ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Marwān and Byzantine Emperor Justinian II circa 73/692 over religious inscriptions on imported papyri and money cited by al-Balādhurī and others lends credence to such speculation – suggesting a possible counter-Christian sensitivity to *internally* transacting commerce in currency bearing the inscriptions of Islam – though in *external* trade, as noted,

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66 Bloch 1933: 14–15; Heck 2006: 185–7.

67 Lopez 1986: 135–6.

68 Morrison 1963: 430–31.

69 Hodges 1982: 8, 154.

70 Bolin 1953: 10 ff.

71 Bloch 1933: 12–13.

the imprimatur of such epigraphy was deemed to be a prime market asset.[72] Lending credence to a 9th-century Carolingian currency "meltdown" hypothesis paralleling that of Caliph ᶜAbd al-Malik in the 7th century, as observed by the orientalist Claude Cahen, is the fact that: "At the precise times that the texts frequently mention the *mancus,* the coins that we have now discovered in the West contain almost no gold *dīnārs.*"[73] In this supposition, Cahen is supported by medieval European economic historian Georges Duby, who asserts: "Taking this regal power into their own hands, the leaders of the Frankish people intended to reserve the monopoly of money for themselves. Subjects were thus compelled to melt down foreign coins, which explains the absence in the Carolingian Empire of the Arab *dirhams* that abound on the more barbaric fringes of Europe. For its rulers had prescribed a uniform type of coin."[74]

Finally, there is the compelling corollary that has been observed by Karl Morrison, who has carefully studied posited close linkages between sundry currencies and Carolingian trade, that despite chronicled source suggestions of a buoyant, active trade between Gaul and Anglo-Saxon England throughout the reign of Charlemagne – a commercial flow that then continued strongly through the rule of Louis the Pious, his son and successor, as well – no *Anglo-Saxon* coins have been found within the confines of the Holy Roman Empire dating to this period either.[75]

An equally plausible corollary is that of Phillip Grierson, who claims that Christian Europe, at this time, sold gold ingots to Byzantium – thus making it not inconceivable that at least some portion of the incoming Muslim dīnār flow then being received in commerce was melted down for this re-export purpose.[76] In this proposition, he is supported by fellow economic historian of medieval Europe, Robert Latouche, who speculates that while direct sales of foreign coins were probably not permitted within Carolingian markets, gold ingots likely were available.[77] Bolin lends further credence to this "currency meltdown" theory in contending that the Frankish Kingdom was then pursuing a longstanding policy of "territorial validity" whereby only its own locally-produced coins were recognized as official tender within indigenous markets.

Any type of coin was valid within a limited area, and within that limited area, only one type of coin could be used. Thus, within the Frankish empire, the currency was limited by national boundaries as early as Merovingian times and the beginning of the Carolingian period. This limitation was rigid. For purposes of international trade, only the "national" coinage might be used and the area of validity of coins thereafter became more restricted still. From the beginning of the 9th century, then, coins had only territorial validity. This reality implied that by the onset of the Carolingian period, no foreign coins whatsoever could be used within the boundaries of the Frankish empire; all foreign coins had to be reminted as Frankish coins; that is, they were melted down

72 Al-Balādhurī 1978: 241–2; Hodges and Whitehouse 1983: 120.

73 Cahen 1981: 9.

74 Duby 1974/1984: 143 ff.

75 Morrison 1963: 432.

76 Grierson 1979a: 1071 ff.; Clough 1959: 73.

77 Latouche 1967: 247.

and the metal was then used to make Frankish deniers. For then, as coins possessed a merely territorial validity, the deniers from one area of circulation in the Empire had to be melted and reminted in the same way whenever they crossed a territorial frontier.[78] Summarizing this "territorial sovereignty" hypothesis, then, it appears quite likely that those Islamic coins not required to underwrite countertrade with the *Dār al-Islām* might well have been melted down simply because they were of no monetary value for *internal* commercial transactions within the Carolingian realm – save as precious metal bullion recast as "art objects" or re-exported as coin or bullion to achieve a more favorable international balance of payments. Certainly, in light of the textual evidence of significant ongoing trade between the *Dār al-Islām* and Carolingia previously described, this latter explanation would, at least partially, explain the relatively lesser number of Islamic currency specimens found in Western Europe when compared with the voluminous coin hoards found in central Russia and the Baltic region. It would similarly explain the abundant availability of precious metal bullion for the creation of magnificent church *objets d'art*, such as the golden canopy erected over the body of St. Marcel at Chalons-sur-Saône – as well as Charlemagne's shift to a heavier silver "*dernier*" circa 178/794.[79]

This supposition likewise is supported by several acknowledged *monetary* realities. Chief among them, it is known there was now a sharp disequilibrium in the gold-to-silver exchange rate amongst the various proximate commercial regions – a differential that also could have substantially contributed to the disappearance of gold in the Christian West. For the gold/silver ratio, it appears from various medieval sources, was then 1:12 in Carolingia; 1:14 within the *Dār al-Islām* itself; and 1:17 in Byzantium. Such disparate ratios thus clearly would have made it advantageous for the West to export its gold to Byzantium, there requited by Byzantine silver, which could then be used to mint Frankish coins. Contemporary Muslims, in turn, would likely have had sufficient indigenous gold and silver reserves to effectively commercially compete within each marketplace.[80]

This theory, involving quite sophisticated "currency arbitrage" – a technique then known to both East and West – thus represents a critical new dimension to the present inquiry – providing a decidedly different, and palpably more plausible, explanation of the directions and flows of early medieval East–West trade than the "cessation of commerce" hypotheses traditionally offered by Henri Pirenne and others – while concurrently demonstrating a largely uninterrupted flow of crucial foreign commerce.[81]

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78 Bolin 1953: 1.

79 Grierson 1979b: 525ff.; Pounds 1974: 78–80; Duby 1974/1984: 97 ff.

80 Cahen 1980: 11 ff.

81 Cf. Pirenne 1974 passim; Heck 2006: 164ff.

Conclusions

The economic bottom line, then, is that while there is little in the source evidence to indicate that there was significant ongoing *international* currency arbitrage within the Islamic empire in its critical first century, other endogenous factors may well have intervened to produce analogous results as to those slightly later in Christian Europe – in this case, a "currency meltdown" to provide bullion to support the monumental 7th-century currency reforms of Caliph ᶜAbd al-Malik b. Marwān as asserted by al-Damīrī – a phenomenon with potential to have seriously skewed modern numismatic conclusions by reducing the surviving body of coin evidence. With regard to imagery, as analysis has shown, it again may well be that the medieval Islamic sources are more accurate than many modern numismatists are willing to concede. Al-Maqrīzī is compelling in his case regarding the impacts of religious objection to the representation of the caliphal figure on coinage on the circulation of mid-7th-century Islamic issues. Why would he and al-Damīrī explicitly raise these significant issues of imagery and currency quantity, therefore, if they were not realities reflecting then contemporary concerns?

The argument likewise often is made that territorially-proximate 14th-century eastern scholars, writing seven centuries after the fact, were chronologically too distant from on the-ground events to be accurate in their revelations. But is it inconceivable that they are equally as accurate as more geographically remote 21st-century western scholars writing on the same developments at a time distance of 14 centuries later? As in the case of medieval economics cited, "negative evidence hypothetical" in numismatics can do an equal disservice to unbiased research.

The reality, then: paralleling the source descriptions of abundant indigenous precious metals in 7th-century Arabia previously documented, the medieval Muslim chroniclers and geographers also often provide equally explicit rationales for many phenomena respecting the nature of early Islamic currency issues that modern numismatists now cite as *prima facie* evidence that they are wrong. Critical source analysis is undeniably quintessential to quality historiography. But is there not an inherent scholarly danger in selectively extracting and castigating as "wrong" certain passages from sources, when they become "wrong only" when taken out of their broader narrative contexts? Numismatics is indeed a powerful technique of historiography. But it must not be tunnel-visioned. For if one's only tool is a hammer, then everything perforce looks like a nail. The problem thus becomes one not of over-reliance upon the sources themselves, but rather of under-reliance on the full context of what they have to say.

In sum, the evolution of early medieval Muslim money is not entirely shrouded in mystery. It is instead a classic case study in currency development well documented in the medieval Islamic chronicles and confirmed by residual mining evidence and surviving coin specimens. Examination of that evidence, in fact, leaves little lingering doubt that the first caliphs possessed a surprisingly highly developed understanding of the application of monetary policies today deemed modern, and of their vital role in stimulating industrial expansion and dynamic economic growth. As working a millennium or more before the benefits of the keen insights of Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, and John Kenneth Galbraith, they laid critical monetary foundations for an

evolving commercial empire that would become the most expansive and productive of its time and the envy of the age.

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Chapter 6
ʿAbd al-Malik's Monetary Reform in Copper and the Failure of Centralization

Lutz Ilisch

In the following paper I will argue in favour of a changed perspective on ʿAbd al-Malik's monetary reform not only as a reform intending Arabization (*taʿrīb*) and Islamicization of gold and silver with side effects on copper, but insofar as it attempted to create a unified system of caliphal gold, silver and copper. The caliphal copper coinage, thus far neglected, was of particular importance for the ideological side of the reform because it was a medium which reached all levels of the population and, unlike the silver, was issued with the intention of completely replacing the older pre-Islamic copper coin. For two reasons – one historiographic and the other numismatic – the failure of the intended caliphal copper coinage was passed over silently both in later medieval historiography on the reform and in the modern numismatic literature as well.

Background

One of the major changes in the monetary system between later antiquity and the Islamic middle ages lies in the status of copper coinage. In the Roman Empire from the Tetrarchic period onwards, copper was an integral element of the coinage. Struck in Imperial mints as legal tender throughout the Empire, it followed coin types similar to those of gold and silver. The profusion of hoards containing large quantities of late Roman and Byzantine copper coins demonstrate that they could be used for larger transactions and were worth hoarding. Copper coinage in the Sasanian Empire was similar inasmuch as it was also part of the imperial coinage struck in the same mints as silver coinage and following the types of the silver. Here, however, hoards of copper coins are unusual, indicating that their use for larger payments was restricted and that they may have been highly overvalued, which could perhaps explain a reluctance to hoard.

In contrast, the Arabic copper coinage of the caliphate and later states such as the Ayyūbids, Mamlukes and Early Ottomans is completely different in character. These coins were issued to circulate on a regional or local basis to serve the demands of a petty coinage for a limited period, after which they were recalled. Recalling (or *tajdīd* in Mamluk terms) meant that their value dropped to copper value, half or a third of the originally decreed circulating value. In order to avoid a strong reluctance to accept copper coins on the part of the population as the recall approached, two governmental measures were employed. These were either to recall at irregular intervals, or to gradually lower the

value of old copper coins to anywhere between the initial value ascribed and the actual value of the copper. Even then the emission system depended on its implementation by the market police.[1] Characteristics of such coins are a noticeable change in design from one issue to the next; frequent occurrence of overstrikes in production; and the occasional occurrence of revaluating countermarks. In terms of coin finds it can be noted that hoarding coins of this type was rare, and the result of accidents rather than deliberation. On the other hand, single finds are common, probably because such coins were more easily lost after recalling than copper coins of more durable value.

This approach corresponded with the principle in Islamic law that only gold and silver (including debased silver) could be *muʿāmala*, while copper coins – *fulūs* – were tokens of a decreed temporary value only, which could not be used for large payments.[2] In practice, there were some exceptions, such as the well-documented reluctance of the Egyptian administration to recall the copper coinage of 759 H. for more than half a century, which caused a serious monetary crisis and a number of contemporary *rasāʾil* by Maqrīzī and others.[3] But this was an exception to the rule, just as occasional heavy copper coins which apparently were linked to the copper value were another exception.

While fulūs of temporarily limited value served the economy in petty trade, they functioned for the administration as a tax. The possible tax income to the state on one side or the burden on the population on the other should not be exaggerated. The necessary volume of copper coins in the hands of the populace was little more than the total of the lowest value precious metal coin to be owned by each of those who wanted to trade in a controlled market (which was only part of the population).

The intervals between the emissions could not have been absolutely regular, because if the dates of recalling had been known then the relative value of the fals to the dirham or dinar should have gone down in advance. Despite this, the Mamluk data from Syria shows that the intervals were fairly regular, e.g. from two to four years in Damascus, but every one to two years in Ḥamā simultaneously and not correlated to the periods of sultans and governors.[4] Periods with an extraordinary demand on the provincial treasuries tended to have the copper recalled more frequently. Acceleration in such a period is best documented for Egypt towards the end of the Mamluk sultanate in the

1 It cannot come as a surprise that detailed information becomes available through the historiography of the ʿulamāʾ who had held posts as muḥtasib in their careers like al-Maqrīzī and his disciples.

2 Udovich 1970: 52–5.

3 al- Maqrīzī 2003 with various early editions and translations. Al- Maqrīzī 1962; Oualalou 1976.

4 I have commented on the varying frequency of recalling Baḥrī-Mamluk copper coinage of Syria in an unpublished paper read on the Paul Balog Memorial Symposium in Jerusalem 17–19 October 1988. The relative sequence of Hamah coppers can now be gathered from Lorenz Korn, *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen* IVc Ḥamâh, Tübingen 1998, for Damascus it is clearer as the coins are mostly dated, cf. Balog 1964, e.g.

chronicle of Ibn Iyās.[5] In the Umayyad period itself, it is no surprise to find in the well datable series of Umayyad fulūs from al-Mawṣil about twice as many emissions during the troubled six year period starting in 126 H. (see Chart 6.1).[6]



Chart 6.1 Changes of obverse types of emission from al-Mawṣil 97–132 H

Copper coins of changing types on a regional or local level are a reality in the Islamic state at least from the beginning of the 8th century onwards, as illustrated by a dated Damascus issue of 87 to 89 H, in the name of al-Walīd, which was already preceded by a dateless anonymous type, characterized by three circles around the obverse field. This is datable on the assumption of a more or less regular recalling interval to about 84 H., although I would insist on a margin of error of one or two years. In fact, 82

[5] Ibn Iyās IV 20 (907 H.), 251 (917 H.), V 60 (922). The financial pressure is already expressed by Ibn Iyās in the context of the 907 H. emission. Balog 1964: 378–82 lists for Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī nine different emissions, of which at least eight originate from Cairo.

[6] Gernot Rotter 1974: 165–98.



Figure 6.1 Umayyad pre-reform 12 nummi from Fusṭaṭ (MACAP)



Figure 6.2 Umayyad pre-reform follis from Tabarīya, 70s H., with /miṣrī/

H is indicated on a regional copper coin from al-Sūs.[7] This was, in any case, in the later years of ʻAbd al-Malik's caliphate. A change in the emission system of copper to short term limited periods of circulation, though still empire-wide around the Eastern Mediterranean, may well date back to the (pre-Islamic) time of Heraclius from which, for the following two hundred years, much of the Byzantine copper coinage is found overstruck on previous types. But Byzantium never went as far as giving up the Imperial character of its copper coinage. The regional or Caliphal character of early imitative

[7] Gyselen 2000: 147, type 41.

coppers produced within the caliphate requires no comment here, other than denying that any attempt at centralized order is *visible*. The production of copper coinage appears to have been organized by whoever had the economic and political power to do so, be it civil or military governmental, tribal aristocratic or institutions of the church. With the imperial image types, to use Luke Treadwell's terminology, in the last third of the seventh century, the *jund* administrations of Dimashq and Ḥimṣ, but not al-Urdunn or Qinnasrīn, became the organizing factor for the copper coinage. Quite possibly a slightly different level of administration is referred to by the Greek word *MACAP* on pre-reform Egyptian 12 *nummi* pieces (Figure 6.1), which can be understood as *miṣr*, pl. *amsār*, as the provincial capital. In this case a sort of municipal administration may have been involved. Additionally it is possible to read an occasionally debated Arabic word on some folles from Ṭabarīya as *maṣrī* (Figure 6.2), which again would refer to the *jund* capital but exclude other towns in the *jund* which issued their own coins.[8]

After this diversity, the initial step in ʿAbd al-Malik's reform in copper was the introduction of the standing caliph type, probably in 75 H. This brought an increase in centralization, although the distribution of mints obviously did not change. The typological uniformity of these coins must have meant that such coins were current on a wide scale from ʿAmmān in Jordan in the South to Qūrus in Turkey in the North. But still it seems that they were not much used for hoarding and the only published hoard from excavations in ʿAmmān demonstrates that the circulation was extremely local, as it only contained 17 coins, all from the mint of ʿAmmān and none from further north.[9]

Distinctive Features and Numismatic Problems of ʿAbd al-Malik's Reform Coppers

ʿAbd al-Malik's reform coppers (Figure 6.3) were probably introduced together with the dinars in 77 H. and went one step further towards a caliphate-wide copper coinage. The coins can be identified on the basis of the frequent overstrikes as this type is only found overstruck on pre-reform coins. The completely unified epigraphic type follows an elementary pattern showing nothing but the main parts of the shahada:

obverse: lā ilāha – illā llāh – waḥdahu

reverse: muḥammad – rasūl – allāh

This stern simplicity with no ornamentation whatsoever, reflects the message of the dinars. As these coppers are anonymous without mint and date indication, numismatists found it very difficult to determine their chronology, so that scholars such as John Walker

[8] While the debate started on the basis of a transliteration as QṬRI, I would now follow a transliteration MṢRI as proposed without comment by Muhammad al-Khūlī, *Naqsh as-sikka ʿalā al-nuqūd al-filasṭīnīya*, according to Nayef. G. Goussous 2004: 134 note 7.

[9] al- Hadīdī 1975: 41–8; Arif 1986: 82 confused this hoard inv. no. J. 7200 with J. 5990, two further standing caliph coppers from ʿAmmān, have to be identified however as Dimashq.



Figure 6.3 Reform fals of ʿAbd al-Malik, ca. 77-82 H.

ignored the evidence of overstrikes. Even recent Arabic scholarship, such as Nayef Goussous' voluminous 2004 study of Umayyad copper coins, shows an unnecessary uncertainty about the chronology.[10] This chronology was first identified by George Miles in 1958 in the context of an article on the copper coinage of Egypt, with precise knowledge but without proper argumentation;[11] the reasons for the overstrike evidence were added by myself in 1980.[12] This was confirmed in 1985 by Shraga Qedar, who published the only known hoard of such coins found in the area of Ghaza, noticing that 77 out of the total of 90 coins showed traces of overstriking on Arab-Byzantine coins, but none on Arabic epigraphical types.[13] In the course of the following twenty years only the question of their chronological setting was discussed by Qedar. The implications of their place in monetary and administrative history has been largely ignored, even in the Princeton dissertation of Harry Bone.[14] I may add one slightly disturbing and complicating observation regarding the chronology, which I made when publishing the excavation coins from ar-Ruṣāfa in Syria. Here we can find that there was apparently one revival of ʿAbd al-Malik's reform issue in the later Umayyad period, probably under the caliph Hishām, in which small copies of the earlier coins were issued, weighing about half

[10] Goussous 2004: 291–314. The catalogue does in fact start the Post reform series with the plain shahada type, but includes various later revivals of post-Umayyad style (eg. nos. 204, 206, 213, 214 are all later emissions, 235 and 244 are both Spanish emissions under Umayyad governors), of different arrangement of the legends and marginal ornamentation (e.g. nos. 245–7 ʿAbbāsid from ʿAmmān, 266 a later Umayyad North African emission), which are distinct from the reform coinage.

[11] Miles 1958: 473.

[12] Ilisch 1980: 25.

[13] Qedar 1984: 65–5, pl. 16–25.

[14] Album 1998: 22 note to no. 153.

of the original ones and measuring only 13 or 14 mm in diameter instead of the earlier 22 to 25 mm. The total numbers in Ruṣāfa were four of the original reform fulūs against 26 of the small later variety, which corresponds to the development of the town.[15] I will leave this later issue aside, mainly because I do not have enough information about the geographical distribution of these smaller coins.

Today the proper reform fulūs are among the most abundant of the surviving medieval Islamic copper coins. They are found from Egypt in the West to Southern Iran in the East. The Tübingen university collection alone has about 130 specimens, and these are not an accumulation of endless duplicates, but instead one in which coins are distinguished by small marks, such as pellets, stars and crescents, which are often distributed in the fields of both sides. From numerous stylistic and some paleographic varieties it can be concluded that the coin type was not produced centrally but in a large number of different mints. Nearly all of the many pre-reform mints in the Bilād al-Shām are also attested in the Arabic post-reform copper coinage after regional copper coinage production resumed in about 82/84 H. This seems to indicate that no copper mints were closed in 77/78 H., when the main part of ʿAbd al-Malik's reforms took place, and that they all shared the task of remonetizing vast quantities of previously circulating bronze coins (Figure 6.4). The distinctive marks of dots, annulets and crescents and their position probably allowed one to identify the coin's place of origin and who was responsible for the issue, or both (Figure 6.5). But they may have been introduced while production was already underway, so that we also find unmarked reform fulūs from many different mints (Figure 6.3). There is some parallel evidence for this in the silver dirham coinage of Damascus, which is important as a means of confirming the early date of the reform process. The Arabic dinars were begun in 77 H., struck centrally in Damascus and without a mint name, as Michael Bates has shown.[16] But the dirhams were begun in their final version in various mints in Jibāl in the following year (Figure 6.6 from the mint of Jayy), and the extreme rarity of these coins suggests that this was towards the end of that year.[17] When Damascus tried to follow suit, the caliphal administration apparently had the intention to centralize the production of silver coinage, as with the gold, in the capital. For practical reasons a second peripatetic mint served as a dependancy of the Damascus mint in the Northern provinces of al-Jazīra and Armīniya.[18] A visible sign

[15] Ilisch 1996: 116, nos. 107–10 (large early), 112–35 (small late fulūs), 130 (discussion of date); Korn 2004: 202 nos. 51–3 (further small late fulūs).

[16] Bates 1986: 256–9.

[17] Mint of Shaqq al-Taymara 78 H.: Klat 2002: 91 no. 250; mint of Jayy 78 H. two specimens known only in various auction catalogues of Peus Nachf., Frankfurt.

[18] Bates 1989: 89–112. In the legends of the coins this mint figures under the various dislocations, either provincial names or place names. Bates' list af the adherent coins can be extended today and also some unidentified place names with dirhams of Damascus style have to be integrated. While the dirham of year 78 H. with the mint names Armīniya (Klat 2002: no. 45) and then Adharbayjān (Klat 2002: no. 23b) do not yet show a relationship with Damascus but rather to al-Kūfa this starts late in the year 78 H. with the dislocation name Adharbayjān (Klat 2002: no. 23a). But only from the year 80 H. onwards with a mint dislocation in Harrān



Figure 6.4 Remonetization: two reform fulūs, both overstruck on die identical standing-caliph-type fulūs

for one central mint would have been the omission of a mint name. In order to trace responsibility for the coinage, the mints controlled by Damascus also had to indicate where their dirhams were struck. So in Adharbayjān in 78 H. and in Dimashq in 79 H. the mint name was added in the mintless dies in the outer margin (Figure 6.7). But later in 79 H., the Damascene mint, unlike its Iranian counterparts, continued to strike its dirhams without any physical indication of the mint (Figure 6.8).[19] That this was not just a mistake of a die cutter is apparent from the fact that at least three different dies of this kind can be found. Apparently al-Hajjāj was not prepared to introduce a centralized structure by closing or adjusting his differently-managed network of silver mints which, unlike the Damascus model, were established institutions in provincial or district capitals, and to introduce a similar centralized structure. Consequently, still in 79 H., Damascus joined the pattern of al-Hajjāj's mints and indicated the mint name in the formula around the obverse (Figure 6.9).[20] This short transitional stage of the dirham coinage with the mint name in the outer margin around the turn of the year 78 and 79 H. is of chronological importance for the undated copper coinage. This is because a few copper fulūs exist from Damascus and the two peculiar mints Sarmīn and Ma'arrat Miṣrīn in Jund Qinnasrīn, which indicate a mint name outside the field in the otherwise plain margin (Figure 6.10). Only very few dies can be found of this strange experiment and it may well have been as short-lived as its parallel in the silver coinage. As with the development of the dirhams, these few fulūs can be dated as well to the turn of 78 and 79 H. The reason to include the mint names may have been that a traceable responsibility

(Klat 2002: no. 273) the dies start to be furnished from Damascus as can be gathered from the particular Damascus style.

19 Klat 2002: 71 no. 1. Walker 1956: 104 no. Kh. 4.

20 Klat 2002: 129 no. 323a with mint name in outer margin, 323b with mint name in mint and date legend for Damascus, p. 36 mint name Adharbayjān in outer margin.



Figure 6.5 Six reverses of Syrian reform fulūs with different mint marks



Figure 6.6 Dirham 78 H., Jayy

was also needed for the copper coins. This need must also have been apparent elsewhere because the Palestinian mints in Ludd and Iliyā also added the mint name, not in this case in the outer margin but at the end of the shahāda (Figure 6.11).[21] As such coins are present in the Ghazza hoard, which contained otherwise only mintless reform fulūs,

[21] Qedar 1984: 65, p. 67f nos 1–13.

their chronological context is clear, and I propose to date them, like the Damascus and related coins, to the turn of 78 and 79 H. As no mint names appear on the other coins, but only cryptic marks (Figure 6.5), it seems reasonable to suppose that such marks, without an added mint name, represented the final solution to the problem of indicating responsibility for the coinage while maintaining a uniform appearance.



Figure 6.7 Dirham 79 H., Dimashq, isolated mint name in outer margin on obverse



Figure 6.8 Dirham 79 H., Dimashq, without mint name

So far no systematic attempt has been carried out to decode the system of these marks, nor has anyone attempted to produce a complete survey of the existing marks. This remains, therefore, an important desideratum for which more provenanced finds of marked coins need to be recorded. The task is not hopeless, however, because the marking system was continued in the subsequent regional coinage. There we find the same or similar marks connected with mint names and reasonable chronological indications

(Figure 6.12). Furthermore, the continued use of old obverse dies of reform fulūs can be found in the subsequent local issues of several mints, mostly in Jund Qinnasrīn, such as Halab, Qinnasrīn, Manbij and Ma'arrat Miṣrīn, but also in Ba'albak, and these obverse dies mostly show distinct mintmarks.[22] So far, however, an identity between the obverse dies of the reform fulūs and the first regional issues cannot be established.



Figure 6.9 Dirham 79 H., Dimashq, mint name in marginal legend on obverse

Was the Emission of Reform Fulūs Really Caliphate-wide?

Again, the reform fulūs have been found between Egypt and Southern Iran. No distribution maps of recorded site and excavation finds, however, makes sense at present because this type of coin has largely been neglected by archaeologists because of the "no mint and date" attribution.[23] There are some additionally differences between reform fulūs from different regions. Coins struck in Egypt are thicker than the Syrian ones and have an almost clumsy thick style of angular Kūfī (Figure 6.13). The Syrian reform fulūs had an intended weight about 3.5 g, rarely ever falling below the dirham weight of 2.9 g, but sometimes well above 4 g (see Chart 6.2). It is not quite clear how they related in value to their Egyptian counterparts of about 6 g, nor is anything known about their ratio to precious metal coins. It is quite possible that the apparently heavier standard in Egypt resulted only from overstriking earlier Byzantine and Post-Byzantine 12 nummi pieces, which were largely in that heavy weight range. But the important assumption

[22] Bone 2000: 207 fig. 95 (Ba'albak), 229 fig. 118 (Qinnasrīn), 235 fig. 123 (unidentified mint, attributed to Ḥalab by Bone) and 124 (Ḥalab), 242 fig. 131 (Ma'arrat Misrīn), 249 fig. 142 (Manbij), 250 fig. 143 (read as Jabrīn by Album and Bone but recte Ḥalab).

[23] Two recent examples: Sheedy, Carson, Walmsley 2001: 151, no. 025 was placed at the end of the Umayyad series with a date ."698–750+" and Berman 2004: 234f, nos. 130–63 with no reference to marks, differentiation of large and small type, gives the date "c. 740–750".



Figure 6.10 Reverses of fulūs from Dimashq (left) and Sarmīn (right) with isolated mint names in margin



Figure 6.11 Fulûs with mint name Iliyā (left) and Ludd (right) added at the end of obverse legends



Figure 6.12 Obverses of four fulūs from Dimashq, undated regional emission of ca. 82 H. with different mint marks



Figure 6.13 Egyptian heavy weight reform fals

that the Egyptian and Iranian reform coppers are contemporaneous to the Syrian core group is mainly based on a clearly early epigraphy in all cases.[24]

For Armīniya there are no published excavation coins from 7th-century sites and in the old capital Dabīl/Dvin only a couple of the apparently late small size specimens have been found.[25] The inclusion of the Iranian fulūs into the context of ʿAbd al-Malik's reform is of course crucial for its interpretation as a caliphal copper coinage in contrast to the earlier and later regional copper coinage, but the case is more difficult because of a lack of material. While Arab-Sasanian typology dominates in Central and Southern Iran and Sistān until the very end of the first century H., and while it would be tempting to assume for the copper coins an equally clear succession from Arab Sasanian to Islamic epigraphic typology and from Pahlavi to Arabic script, this is not an historical reality. In the regional Iranian copper coinage of the later Umayyad period the two concepts change several times and also regional differences are noticeable. Consequently undated coins are difficult to place. An Iranian version of the reform coppers is only known from the Iṣṭakhr excavations (where 28 out of 78 post reform Umayyad coppers belong exactly to this type) and in a single specimen from the Susa excavations in Khuzistān.[26] Here the chronological frame starts with the introduction of Arabic silver dirhams in 78 H., while a securely datable image type from Sūs dated 82 H.[27] seems to mark the

24 The initial position of the plain shahada type copper coins in Egypt right after ʿAbd al-Malik's monetary reform could be confirmed by archeological evidence. On the 2nd Assemani Symposium on the Islamic Coinage in Trieste, 29–31 August 2008, Daniele Castrizio reported in a survey of the excavation coins from Antinopolis, a site which was apparently abandoned in the early years of the 8th century, that the spectrum of coins ended with plain shahada type coppers, while none of the later Umayyad post-reform types from Egypt was present.

25 Musheghyan 1962: 60, nos. 10–11.

26 Göbl 1960: 64, no. XX, pl. VII.

27 Gyselen 2000: 147 type 41.

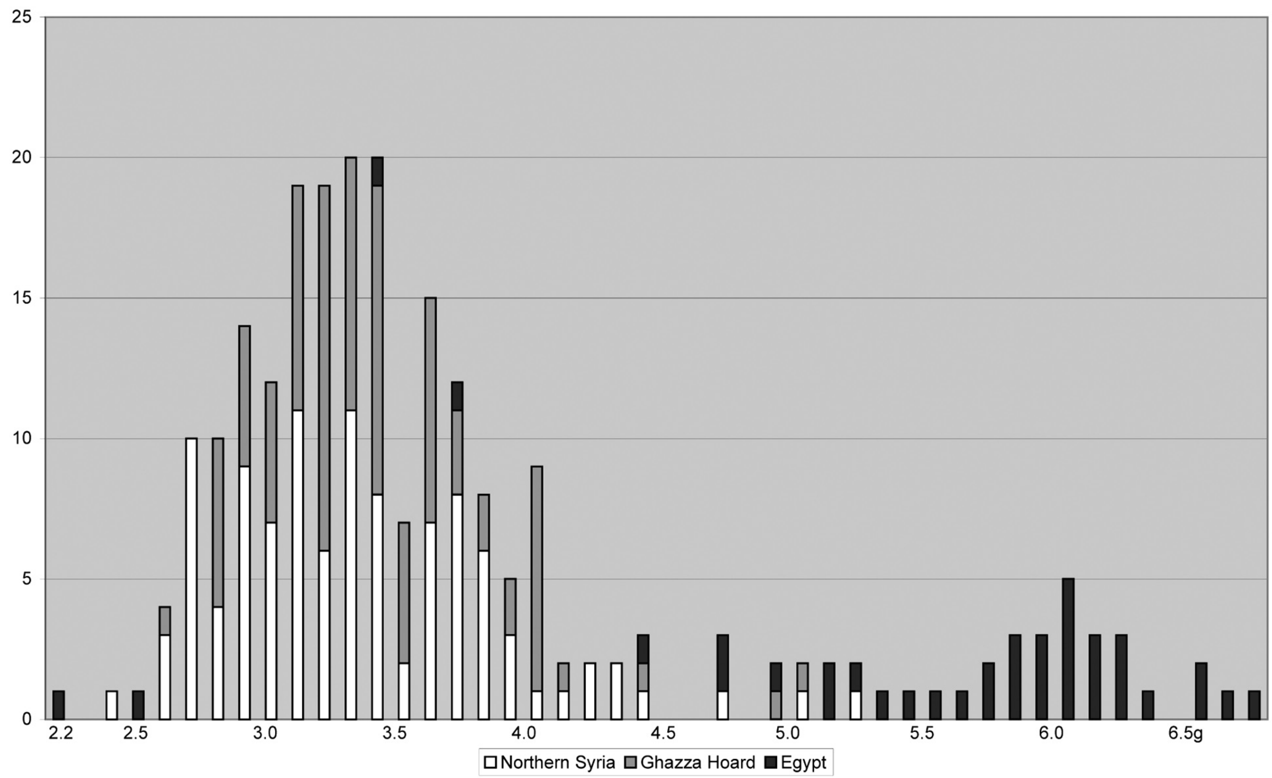


Chart 6.2 Weights of fulūs

reintroduction of provincial coppers. The Southern Iranian reform fulūs are of the same size as the Syrian ones but following local traditions they display a much thinner fabric with a fineline epigraphy.



Figure 6.14 Iranian light weight reform fals with additional word /jā'iz/

However, in a survey of the chronology of the Arab-Sasanian copper coinage(which Rika Gyselen in her recent catalogue of such coins had largely left open), Stephen Album placed the Iranian reform type, which he calls "plain shahāda type" in three varieties, outside the sphere of 'Abd al-Malik's reform, to a period about 96 to 100 H. This dating is attractive because it places the coins immediately before the emissions of 100 and 101 H. of al- Kūfa and al-Baṣra, which were followed by Arabic epigraphic types in various mints throughout Iran. One of his most important arguments against the early dating to the period of 'Abd al-Malik is the existence of a pre-reform type fals from Sābūr dated 80 H.,[28] falling exactly into the presumed period of reform fulūs. Another is seen in the stylistic resemblance to certain later Arab-Sasanian types.[29] I agree that this late dating is probably correct for one of the three varieties with the Pahlavi word *afid* (the wish "may it grow") above the shahāda and double circle around both sides,[30] but not for the stylistically distinct and obviously earlier varieties with and without the word jā'iz (Figures 6.14 and 6.15), which are much closer to the Syrian and Egyptian reform fulūs. The regional fals from Sābūr of 80 H. may be reconcilable based on the fact that the silver coinage of Sābūr produced drachms for both al-Hajjāj and caliphal dirhams at the same time. So the case of 'Abd al-Malik's reform fulûs in Fārs remains somewhat doubtful. Unfortunately no large complex of excavation coins is available from Jibāl.

28 Gyselen 2000: 124f, type 9.

29 Album, Goodwin 2002: 48.

30 Miles 1959: 43 no. 173–75; Gyselen 2000: 168, type 71.



Figure 6.15 Iranian light weight reform fals

There is no evidence for reform fulūs at the fringes of the caliphate, neither in Marw and Sīstān in the East nor in Ifrīqiya in the West.[31]

The Disintegration of Copper Coinage

It is clear that the uniform caliphal copper coinage of the reform type did not last. But how long did it remain in circulation? I mentioned already that the next emission, which was characterized by three marginal circles, bore mint names and was only struck in the Southern part of Bilād al-Shām (Jund Dimashq, al-Urdunn, Filasṭīn), while the Northern provinces each had its own type of coins.[32] Coins of this type are normally not overstruck on reform coppers, so that it may be assumed that the reform fulūs remained in circulation and both types circulated simultaneously; while later, reform fulūs are found suspiciously rarely overstruck. With a second emission to follow, the remaining

31 Neither the excavation coins from Marw, cf. Herrmann, Kurbansakhatov e.a 1994: 64f (Islamic coins by Luke Treadwell), and Pendjikent, cf. Smirnova 1963, nor the vast quantities of coins brought by Afghan dealers to Europe during the Taliban period contained this type. The earliest known Umayyad copper coins from Balkh date to 93 H., cf. Schwarz 2002: 65 nos. 450–54. In Ifrīqiya a certain an-Nu'mān issued copper coins of Arabic inscriptions but Byzantine typology still in 80 H. and Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr still emitted Latin-inscribed coppers with imperial busts in Tripoli, Walker 1956: 59–62.

32 Bone 2000: 130 speaks of 18 mints sharing the treble circle type, not realizing that with these issues centralization starts to fall apart; he acknowledges the simultaneous dating of the diverging coins for jund Qinnasrīn, types Qinnasrīn 2 (p. 229), Ḥalab 1 (p. 235), Ma'arrat Miṣrīn 2 (p. 242), Sarmīn 3 (p. 246), Manbij 1 (p. 249), Jabrīn 1 (p. 250) while the jund of Ḥimṣ seems not to have had a new emission at this stage.

unity of the South was further fragmented. As mentioned before the 87 H. emission of Dimashq has its own type with the date and the name of the caliph al-Walīd, while about the same time his brother Sulaymān placed his name on coins of his governorship of Filasṭīn. Al-Urdunn also went its own way. Clearly this was no longer a caliphal coinage but a regional one. In the East the details of the development are still far from clear. But by and large the copper coinage became entirely Arab Sasanian again with Pahlavi legends prevailing until about the year 100, when the provincial coinage once more turned to alternating between purely Arabic epigraphic types and Arab Sasanian types. The regularity of the Arabic types increased in the 120s and the last use of a Sasanian bust in Southern Iran dates to 137 H. (i.e. to the ʿAbbāsid period), and in Bust even as late as 209 H.[33]

Intentions of ʿAbd al-Malik's Monetary Reform

Realizing that ʿAbd al-Malik built up a nearly caliphate-wide unity of the copper coinage in two steps, a unity which then disintegrated in two steps, leaves little doubt that the unity of copper coinage was intentional, but difficult to maintain. It could have been given up by the administration in Damascus as a result of the realization that the original monetary goal could not be reached. On the ideological side, a five- or six-year-long circulation for a medium that undoubtedly carried the message to any inhabitant of the caliphate from Egypt to Iran could have been regarded as sufficiently successful. The reform coins themselves do not tell us anything about who was really in control of the mints and who profited from them. It is equally possible that petty coinage as an interregional medium of exchange turned out to be much less needed or used than anticipated. Another alternative might be that the unity of copper coinage, even if found to be useful, was traded away to the governors by the central government in exchange for another tax or for anything more desirable. For example, at about the same period that the copper coinage reverts to provinciality, the mints for silver in the East are centralized in the newly founded Wāsiṭ about 84 H.; this was what finally stopped the production of Arab-Sasanian type silver coins, while all over Iran the local copper coinage continued the Sasanian type imagery.

In the period of Arabic nationalism ʿAbd al-Malik's monetary reform was interpreted primarily as Arabization, while today the tendency is to interpret it as Islamization. While both aspects are undeniable it has to be recognized that on an economic level the reform in general meant the introduction of new denominations, the dinar against the heavier solidus and the dirham against the heavier drachm. The epigraphic Arabic and religious design was the mark of this new coinage, yet in Southern Iranian mints like Sābūr the dirham and drachm continued to be struck alongside each other for several years. The survival of large quantities of Sasanian type drachms in later hoards until the early 3rd century AH also shows that the old coinage was not intentionally replaced by

[33] Gyselen 2000: 159 type 60 (Shīrāz 137 H.); Lowick 1999: 374 no. 748 (Shīrāz 137 H.), 380 no. 807 (Bust 209 H.).

the new one.[34] On the economic side the reform was not at all revolutionary but highly pragmatic.

It may be argued that the survival of pre-reform typology was a consequence of less influence of the central government in largely self-governed provinces. However the existence of a rare Sasanian type drachm struck by one of al-Hajjāj's governors in al-Kūfa in 79 H., the year after the inception of the reform for silver, confirms the temporary coexistence of drachms and dirhams under the control of the central administration and thus of the monetary interpretation.[35] *Vis-à-vis* Christian typology, the reform was certainly more radical.

Finally, the following questions must be answered: why do the medieval reports on the reform (al-Wāqidī, al-Balādhurī) mention only the silver and gold and not the copper, and why have numismatists (with the possibile exception of George Miles) largely failed to recognize the special character of the reform copper coinage. The first question is easy: the Arabic historiographical tradition on this subject starts with awā'il-traditions, with answers to the question "who first struck the Arabic dirham/dinar". The question itself implies a later perspective. When the question was asked, in the 'Abbāsid period, copper coins were no longer an integrated part of the monetary system.[36] Moreover it is in the nature of awā'il traditions to ask for the beginning of that which eventually survived, not for any abortive attempts. On the probable basis of a different tradition, the Syriac chronicle of Bar Hebraeus dates the reform precisely and mentions gold, silver and copper.[37] The second question is aimed at us numismatists. For many centuries curators of collections have been forced to find manageable criteria for filing away collection holdings. Unfortunately the modest and sparse reform coppers were labelled with exclusively negative attributes: "anonymous copper coins without mint and date with purely religious inscriptions". For this reason they have not been placed into their historic contexts or into the proper sequence of mint production. So, after all, finding the right chronological setting already constitutes systematic progress, whereas an attribution by mint is still impossible in nearly all cases.

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34 This phenomenon has been commented on frequently cf. Gyselen and Kalus 1983: 61–76: part II. Trésors monétaires mixtes des premiers siècles de l'Islam.

35 Gaube 1973: pl.4 no. 38. Album and Goodwin 2002: 33 and no. 6.

36 Except for areas bordering economies which had integrated copper in their monetary system, e.g. the Byzantine Empire and China in the Thughūr al-Shāmīya and Māwara al-naḥr, copper coins went out of use in the early Samarra period to be restated only in the 5th century by base silver and in the 6th century AH. by proper copper. It may be assumed that the place of copper was temporarily taken over by fragments of precious metal coins, although the primary function of fragmenting precious metal was balancing weighed money. Stepková 1956: 329–37. Equally different ways of account keeping on paper instead of instant payments reduced the necessity of petty coinage, cf. Goitein 1967: 240. The replacement of copper coins by bread in Baghdad is also reported by Maqrīzī 1962: 66f.

37 Stickel 1870: 54. Barhebraeus 1932: 104.



Figure 6.16 Reform fals of ʿAbd al-Malik's period and later revival of type under the caliph Hishām

Acknowledgements

All images are from the Tuebingen University collection, except for Figures 6.2 (Goussous 2004), 6.6 (Dr. Busso Peus Nachf., auction November 2004, lot no. 994), 6.7 (Klat 2002, no. 323a, Shaykh Hamad collection), and 6.15 (Miles 1959 nos. 220/222)

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Chapter 7
Early Islamic Urbanism and Building Activity in Jerusalem and at Hammath Gader

Jodi Magness

Introduction

Excavations by Israeli archaeologists in the years following the 1967 Six-Day War revealed a series of monumental structures around the southern end of Jerusalem's Haram ash-Sharif (Temple Mount). The existence of these structures indicated that the Umayyad period was characterized by a previously unrecognized degree of prosperity and building activity. In this paper I reevaluate the evidence for the chronology of these buildings. I suggest that, contrary to the excavators' reports, the buildings continued in use through the Abbasid period, perhaps until the earthquake of 1033. Next I analyse the final report on the excavations at Hammath Gader, where a monumental Roman bath complex supposedly was destroyed and put out of use by the earthquake of 749. I conclude that the bath complex continued in use with evidence of substantial repairs and alterations through the Abbasid period, until it was destroyed, apparently in the earthquake of 1033. Both sites demonstrate intense activity and occupational continuity through the early Islamic period, with no significant decline in the Abbasid period. I end with a consideration of how coin evidence has contributed to the misdating of associated archaeological remains.

The Early Islamic Structures South and Southwest of al-Haram Ash-Sharif

Excavations directed by the late Benjamin Mazar and by Meir Ben-Dov after 1967 brought to light a series of monumental early Islamic buildings around the southern and western sides of the Jerusalem's Haram (see Figure 7.1).[1] The largest (Building II), located south of the Haram, measures approximately 96 x 84 meters and has outer walls that are 2.75–3.10 meters thick.[2] It consists of a central open courtyard encircled by a peristyle and surrounded by rows of elongated rooms on all four sides. The rooms measure

[1] I am not concerned here with the function of these buildings, which are usually referred to as "palaces." The excavators designated the buildings with Roman numerals (II–IV). All dates refer to the Common Era unless otherwise indicated.

[2] Ben-Dov 1971a: 36-37 (the same report was published in Ben-Dov 1971b); Ben-Dov 1985: 297 (where the dimensions are given as 94 x 84 m).

between 17–20 meters long by 4–8 meters wide. Square piers at regular intervals along the long walls supported a system of vaults.[3] The excavators suggested that staircases on four sides of the complex (in narrow passages between the rooms on the north and south sides on the one hand, and the east and west sides on the other) provided access to a second-story level. Each story was at least 6.5 meters high. The main gate was located in the middle of the east side of the building, and others were located in the middle of the west and north sides. A bridge on the north side at the second-story level provided access directly to the al-Aqsa mosque. The building was served by a sophisticated system of gutters and drainage channels for rainwater and waste.[4]

A second building (III) located immediately to the west of building II has a similar plan consisting of elongated rooms around a central peristyle courtyard. A row of six elongated rooms is located in the southeast corner of the building, while large square piers in the southwest corner supported a system of arches and vaults. The main gate was in the middle of the east side (directly opposite the west gate of Building II), and other gates were located in the middle of the north and west sides, as in Building II. And like Building II, Building III was equipped with a sophisticated drainage system.[5]

Renewed excavations conducted since 1995 by Ronny Reich and Yaakov Billig, and by Yuval Baruch have revealed that Building III is larger than Mazar and Ben-Dov thought, measuring ca. 75 x 75 meters. It extends as far as the line of the Cardo along the bottom of the Tyropoeon Valley, which Baruch and Reich suggest separated the administrative or government quarter from the civilian part of town.[6] Baruch and Reich excavated four elongated rooms in the southeast corner of Building III (C-F) that have square piers at regular intervals as in Building II. They note that these rooms contained deliberately dumped fills. In some cases the fills were dumped in conjunction with the raising of the walls, and in other cases they were dumped after the walls were finished. In other words, the elongated rooms represent foundations that were filled with dumped material in order to level the area.[7]

In Buildings II and III, the lower parts of the walls of the elongated rooms were constructed of a concrete mixture consisting of stone and grey lime mortar. This mixture was poured into a wood form or scaffolding. The upper parts of the walls were constructed of large roughly cut stones, with small stones between them, held together by grey mortar containing much charcoal. The walls were not plastered.[8]

Mazar and Ben-Dov uncovered part of a third building (IV) to the north of Building III, west of the Haram and opposite Robinson's Arch. It differs in plan from the other two buildings, having two large courtyards surrounded by rows of square piers but no elongated rooms.[9] In my opinion elongated rooms were used to create the foundations

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3 Ben-Dov 1971a: 36.

4 Ben-Dov 1971a: 37; Ben-Dov 1985: 294, 307–8.

5 Ben-Dov 1971a: 38; Ben-Dov 1985: 312.

6 Baruch and Reich 1999: 131, 140.

7 Baruch and Reich 1999: 131, 136 and Fig. 1b; Ben-Dov 1973: 85.

8 Baruch and Reich 1999: 132 and Figs. 5, 9; Ben-Dov 1973: 83–4; Ben-Dov 1985: 309.

9 Ben-Dov 1971a: 38–9.

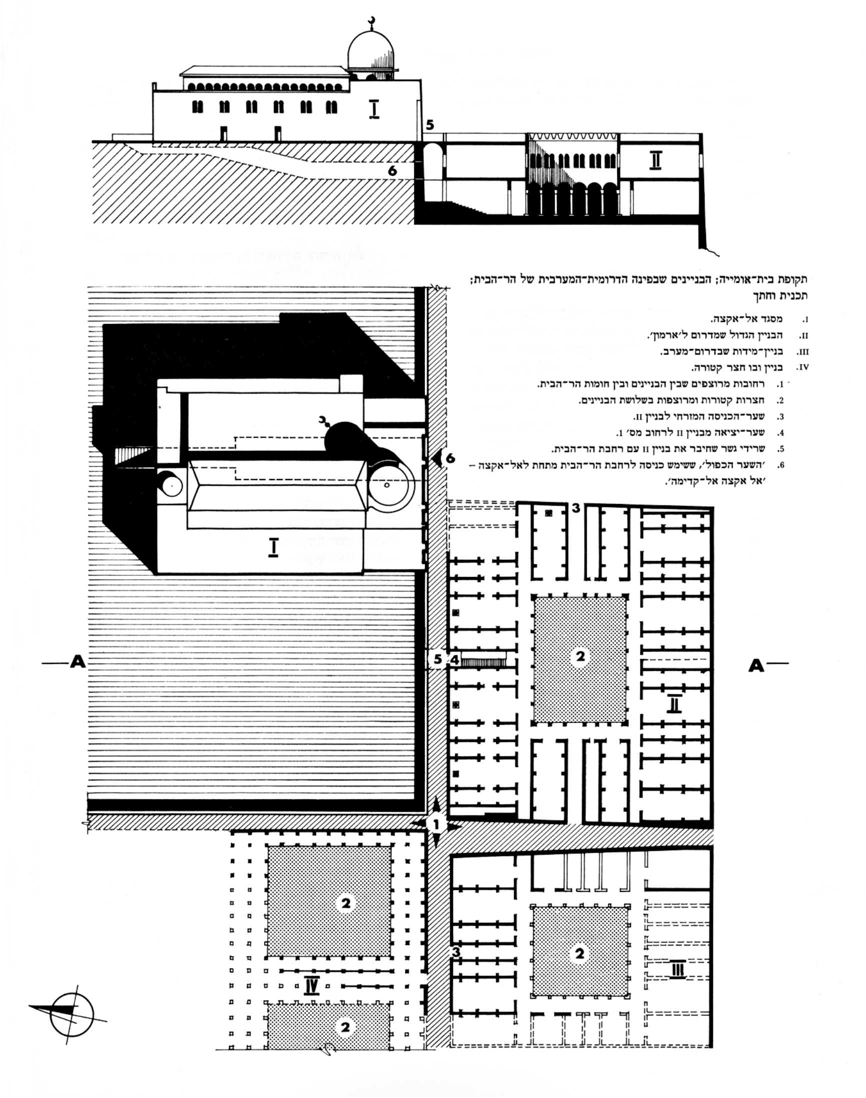


Figure 7.1 Plan of the monumental early Islamic buildings south and southwest of Jerusalem's Haram (from Ben-Dov 1971a: 34; reproduced with permission of the Israel Exploration Society)

in areas where the bedrock is very deep and steeply sloping, whereas square piers were employed in areas where the bedrock was close to the contemporary ground level.[10] Ben-Dov describes this technique as follows: "Sometimes the terrain was exceptionally low, making it necessary to built (*sic*!) foundation walls and cover them with fill."[11] Building IV incorporates the remains of a Roman legionary bath house, which seems to have remained in use as a bath house.[12]

Mazar and Ben-Dov noted that all three buildings had been robbed out, leaving only small sections of the walls and a few patches of floors surviving at or above ground level.[13] Baruch and Reich also found little evidence of floors in Building III.[14] Much of the robbing seems to have occurred in the Fatimid period (eleventh century).[15] Most of the floors on the ground story of the buildings were of stone. Because the flagstones were laid on a layer of terra rosa, Ben-Dov suggests they represent temporary floors that were meant to be replaced with mosaics.[16] In some places patches of mosaics were preserved, mostly of large white tesserae with no design or simple designs.[17] In Building IV a pavement of large square polished flagstones was preserved.[18] Small colored tesserae (some of glass) found in the fills in the buildings probably come from wall or ceiling mosaics.[19] Fragments of wall paintings were also found in the fills.[20]

Mazar and Ben-Dov dated the buildings to the Umayyad period based on the following considerations: 1) the buildings directly overlie houses from the end of the Byzantine period; 2) the plans of the buildings resemble Umayyad *qusur* and fortified enclosures such as those at Khirbet al-Mafjar and Khirbet al-Minya; 3) they dated the finds from the drainage channels in the buildings to the Umayyad period.[21] Specifically, Mazar and Ben-Dov attributed the construction of these buildings to al-Walid (705–15), the son of Abd al-Malek (685–705). They suggested that the Bab al-Walid, a gate in the Haram mentioned by al-Muqadasi, should be identified with the gate leading

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10 Ben-Dov 1971b: 37 and 1985: 309 notes that the foundations of Building II were up to nine meters deep.

11 Ben-Dov 1985: 309 (describing Building II).

12 Ben-Dov 1985: 316–17; on 288 he notes that the buildings of Aelia Capitolina must have remained standing until the end of the Byzantine period.

13 Ben-Dov 1971a: 35; Ben-Dov 1971b: 35.

14 Baruch and Reich 1999: 132.

15 Ben-Dov 1971b: 35. But on p. 38 he says that the pottery and coins from the robbers' trenches of the walls of Building II indicate that the robbing activity occurred in the 12th and 13th centuries, apparently at the time the Crusader city wall was built.

16 Ben-Dov 1985: 311.

17 Ben-Dov 1971a: 38–9; Baruch and Reich 1999: 132.

18 Ben-Dov 1971a: 39.

19 Ben-Dov 1971a: 39.

20 Ben-Dov 1971a: 36–7; Ben-Dov 1985: 294–5, 304.

21 Ben-Dov 1971a: 36.

from Building II to the south end of the Haram.[22] If they are correct, this gate was still functioning in the tenth century.

According to Mazar and Ben-Dov the buildings were destroyed in the earthquake of 747/48.[23] Because there were no signs of collapse (that is, no piles of stones associated with the collapse of the walls) and few surviving floors, the excavators concluded that construction halted before completion of the project: "The ambitious building program inaugurated in the days of Abd-al-Malik was never fully consummated, so that several details of the Omayyad buildings – including the final flooring – were never completed."[24]

In all of the buildings the excavators found evidence of later reoccupation, which they associated with squatters, including later walls that incorporated spolia and abutted the original walls, creating rooms that had no relationship to the original building plan. The floors associated with this reoccupation lay at a higher level than the original floor level.[25] In Building III Baruch and Reich found mosaic floors, some with simple designs at a higher level, which they associated with this later reoccupation.[26] Elsewhere Baruch and Reich describe lime or chalk floors with ovens, thin walls, channels, and pits.[27] Mazar and Ben-Dov, and Baruch and Reich dated the reoccupation of these buildings to the Abbasid period (late 8th to 9th century) based on the associated finds.[28] Specifically, Baruch and Reich describe the associated finds as including "glazed pottery and large quantities of animal bones, especially sheep."[29] After this brief reoccupation the buildings were abandoned and robbed out.[30]

According to Mazar and Ben-Dov, this grandiose Umayyad building project was abandoned before the earthquake of 747/48 due to economic decline.[31] The unfinished buildings were brought down by the earthquake, which Ben-Dov says caused cracked or warped foundations and walls, fallen columns, and sunken floors.[32] With the fall of the Umayyads and rise of the Abbasid dynasty the following year the center of power shifted to the east, leaving Syria and Palestine a backwater. As Ben-Dov puts it, "the rabid prejudice of the Abbassid caliphs and the historians under their patronage…went far out of their way to obliterate all reference to anything Omayyad."[33] "Hence the role played

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22 Ben-Dov 1971a: 39; see Le Strange 1965: 94.

23 Ben-Dov 1971a: 38. The earthquake has since been redated to 749; see Tsafrir and Foerster 1997: 136 n. 227.

24 Ben-Dov 1985: 312.

25 Ben-Dov 1971a: 35.

26 Baruch and Reich 1999: 132.

27 Baruch and Reich 1999: 139.

28 Ben-Dov 1971a: 35, 39; Baruch and Reich 1999: 139.

29 Baruch and Reich 1999: 139 (my translation from the Hebrew).

30 Ben-Dov 1971a: 35; 37–8.

31 Ben-Dov 1985: 312.

32 Ben-Dov 1985: 321. Baruch and Reich 1999: 135, also claim to have found evidence that the construction of Building III was never completed.

33 Ben-Dov 1985: 293.

by the Abbassids in the area around the Temple Mount ranged from abstaining from building activity to outright, deliberate destruction, and the stratum dating from their reign is essentially a negative one from an archaeological viewpoint. Actually, it is not a stratum in the strict sense of the word, but rather evidence of the destruction caused to the Omayyad buildings."[34] Even Paul Wheatley repeats the standard trope describing Abbasid neglect of Jerusalem.[35]

It is difficult to evaluate the excavators' proposed chronology as no final excavation reports have been published. Nevertheless, in my opinion the available archaeological evidence points to a different sequence of events. First, Baruch and Reich mention finding Umayyad coins in the foundation level fills in Building III. These include a group of coins discovered inside the foundations of the courtyard's peristyle wall, the latest of which dates to ca. 730.[36] This indicates that construction of these buildings was still underway during the reign of Hisham (assuming the project was initiated by al-Walid I), not surprising given the scale of the undertaking. Second, the signs of damage described by Ben-Dov (cracked walls and warped foundations, fallen columns, and sunken floors) could have been caused by a later earthquake, perhaps that of 1033, which apparently damaged the al-Aqsa mosque as well (as a result the number of gates into the mosque was reduced).[37] It was apparently after this earthquake (of 1033) that the city walls were rebuilt, along the lines preserved today, with the south wall of the Old City overlying the early Islamic buildings.[38] The robbing activity apparently occurred after this.

I also question the excavators' conclusion that the buildings were unfinished (Ben-Dov describes them as "shells") when construction stopped.[39] If this were the case, we would not expect the plumbing system to have been functioning. However, according to Ben-Dov, the sewage system, which included drainage pipes from the second-story level was blocked with occupational debris and refuse.[40] This material, which "dated to the final years of the building's [II] existence," included buff ware vessels described by Ben-Dov as "light-colored and decorated with molded designs characteristic of 'Khirbet Mafjar ware.'"[41] Other pottery found in the drainage channels and in association with the main occupation of the palaces included zoomorphic vessels and "chamber pots" glazed on the inside in dark green or dark brown.[42] The presence of mold made buff ware and glazed pottery indicates that the main phase of occupation continued at least into the 9th century.

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34 Ben-Dov 1985: 323.

35 Wheatley 2001: 297.

36 Baruch and Reich 1999: 139.

37 For this earthquake see Stacey 2004: 8; Le Strange 1965: 23; Bahat 1990: 82 attributes the destruction of the palaces to this earthquake..

38 Bahat 1993: 786, who describes the earthquake of 1033 as the worst to hit Jerusalem. In contrast see Wheatley 2001: 297.

39 See Ben-Dov 1985: 321.

40 Ben-Dov 1971b: 35, 37; Ben-Dov 1985: 307–8.

41 Ben-Dov 1985: 276.

42 Ben-Dov 1985: 319–20.

The evidence reviewed here suggests the following chronology and sequence. The buildings were constructed in the latter part of the Umayyad period. Even if the project was initiated by al-Walid I, work continued at least through the reign of Hisham. Elsewhere I have suggested that the fortification walls of Jerusalem were repaired by Hisham.[43] Contrary to the excavators' conclusion, construction of the buildings around the Haram seems to have been completed, at least to the point where the plumbing system was fully functioning, including at the second-story level. It is not clear whether the earthquake of 749 caused significant damage. However, the ceramic evidence indicates that occupation continued well into the Abbasid period. This scenario is supported by Mazar and Ben-Dov's identification of the Bab al-Walid as the gate leading from Building II to the south end of the Haram, which, if they are correct, was still functioning in al-Muqadasi's time.[44] However, around this time or soon afterward the buildings were abandoned and began to collapse, and some of the original floors and parts of the walls were robbed out.[45] This was followed by a brief phase of reoccupation by a different population. Although this occupation is poorer than the original phase, the presence of mosaic floors indicates that the inhabitants were not squatters. I propose dating this occupation phase to the 10th to early 11th century. The earthquake of 1033 may have caused the damage noted by Ben-Dov, after which time the buildings were abandoned permanently and the remaining walls and floors were robbed out.

Hammath Gader

The mineral-rich hot springs of Gadara (modern Umm Qeis), called Hammath Gader, lie in a valley on the banks of the Yarmuk River.[46] Excavations conducted by Yizhar Hirschfeld between 1979 and 1982 brought to light the remains of a monumental bath complex covering an area of about 78 x 60 meters (see Figure 7.2).[47] Hirschfeld dates the establishment of the bath complex to the 2nd century C.E., probably during the reign of Antoninus Pius. The complex was in continuous use until it was destroyed in the earthquake of 749. Hirschfeld divides the occupation into three main phases: I (Roman period, mid-2nd to mid-4th centuries), II (Byzantine period: IIA = mid-4th to mid-5th centuries; IIB = mid-5th to mid-7th centuries), and III (Umayyad period). Two later phases, dated to the Abbasid-Fatimid period (Phase IV) and the 13th–14th centuries (Phase V), were identified on top of the building's ruins.[48]

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43 Magness 1992.

44 In fact, Ben-Dov 1971b: 40, suggests that the northern wing of Building II was inhabited until the 10th century, in order to account for al-Muqadasi's reference to the Bab al-Walid.

45 Ben-Dov 1971b: 35, describes "a dump of walls and ceilings" in the 1.5 meter thick layer separating the original floors from the later floors above. However, Reich and Baruch 1999: 135, note an absence of evidence of building collapse on top of the original floor level.

46 Hirschfeld 1997: 1.

47 Hirschfeld 1997: 9–10; this volume is the final excavation report.

48 Hirschfeld 1997: 11–13.

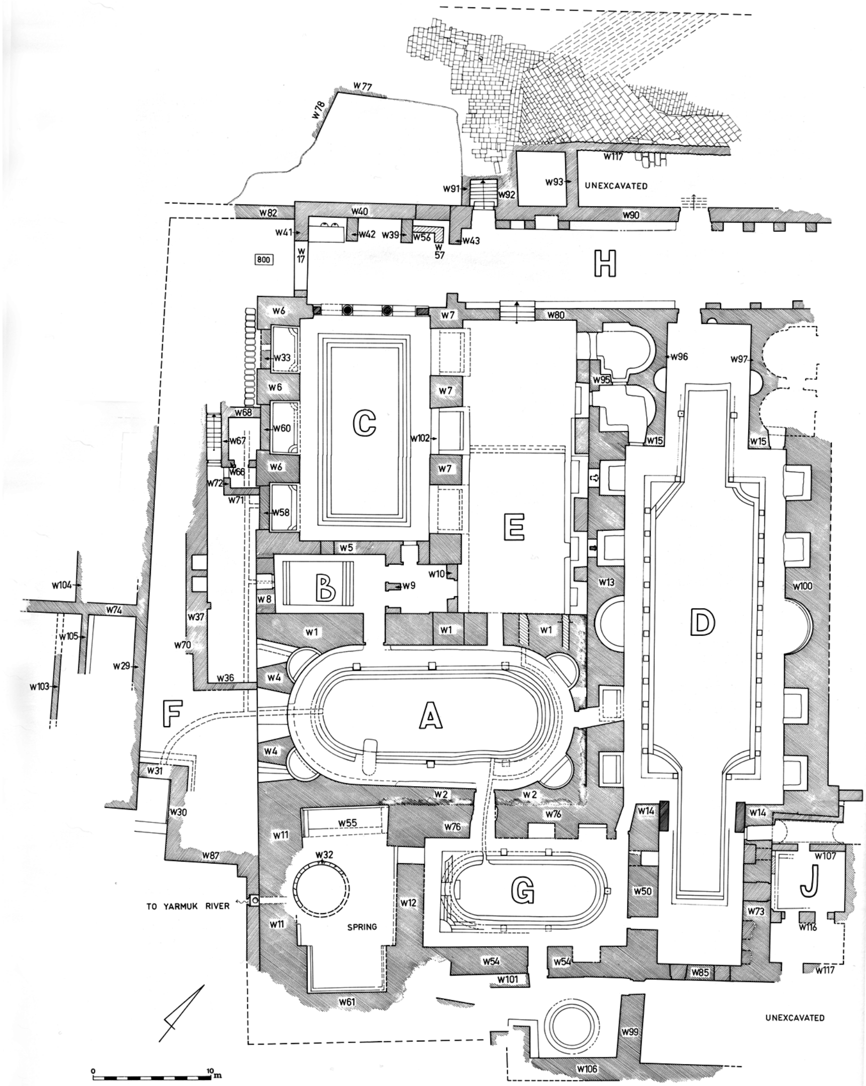


Fig. 11. General plan of the remains of the baths exposed in the excavations.

Figure 7.2 Plan of the baths at Hammath Gader (from Hirschfeld 1997: 12, Fig. 11; reproduced with permission of the Israel Exploration Society)

According to Hirschfeld, "The earthquake of 749 destroyed the building totally and instantaneously. The intensity of the earthquake is indicated by the large amounts of rubble that filled the halls. In Area D, parts of the walls and ceiling collapsed on top of one another, filling the central pool. In other areas, especially in the southern part of the baths complex, the rubble was found on top of a thick (1 m and more) layer of alluvium...

The destruction appears to have been on such a large scale that the inhabitants of the site were unable to clear the rubble. Instead, they levelled the area above the ruins and made secondary use of the early masonry in order to erect temporary walls."[49] The Abbasid period occupation is attributed to squatters living or camping among the ruins of the bath complex.[50] However, a reexamination of the ceramic and numismatic finds indicates that the Abbasid period occupation antedates the destruction and abandonment of the bath complex. Here I review this evidence and suggest that bath complex continued to function until the eleventh century, when it was apparently brought down by the earthquake of 1033.

Hirschfeld's chronology is based almost entirely on the numerous dedicatory inscriptions that were found throughout the complex.[51] For example, a long inscription (number 49) dedicated by Eudocia in the Hall of Fountains (Area D) indicates that the empress visited the baths in the mid-fifth century.[52] One Greek inscription (number 1) in hexameter verse refers to a catastrophic destruction caused by an earthquake:

> Be no longer in dread of the water-carrying bath being smashed, which brought infinite sorrows to many, by hurting and killing men, in many cases children, for the [yawning] earth buried it all from above. But now, having laid a pavement [on either side], made a sporting place Nikas (?), having let pleasant water to be drawn elsewhere.[53]

This inscription (number 1) was located in the center of Area C (the Hall of Piers). Although it is undated, Hirschfeld and Leah di Segni believe the inscription refers to an earthquake that devastated Phoenicia during the reign of Marcian (450–57).[54] They interpret the reference to the laying of a pavement "on either side" as connecting this inscription (number 1), which is located in the center of Area C (the Hall of Piers), with a dated inscription (number 2, year 455) inside the entrance to Area E (the Hall of Inscriptions).[55] However, there is no reason to assume that the phrase "on either side" refers to the pavement in two different halls. To the contrary, there is no apparent connection between the two inscriptions, which are not aligned with each other and have visibly different letter forms.[56] Once inscription number 1 (which mentions the earthquake) is disassociated from the second inscription (dated to 455), there is no reason to date the earthquake to the mid-5th century.

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49 Hirschfeld 1997: 158.

50 Hirschfeld 1997: 158–60.

51 Some 60–70 Greek inscriptions were discovered; see di Segni 1997.

52 Di Segni 1997: 228–33.

53 di Segni 1997: 188.

54 di Segni 1997: 188.

55 di Segni 1997: 188, 190.

56 Contrary to Hirschfeld's statement (1997: 130) that the two inscriptions are "similar in style and calligraphy"; although, as di Segni notes (1997: 233), the script of inscription number 1, which refers to the earthquake is close to that of Eudocia's inscription (number 49).

Evidence of repairs and changes associated by the excavators with Phase II – the period after the mid-5th century earthquake – was discovered throughout the baths. In Area C (the Hall of Piers), the pool in the center of the room was filled with rubble and paved with a "late floor" of Phase II (L313).[57] The inscription (number 1) referring to an earthquake was set into the middle of this floor. Three bathtubs between the piers of W6 (L305, 325 [covered by an opus sectile floor], 321) went out of use after the earthquake and were covered with Phase II floors, as were the pools in Area E (the Hall of Inscriptions) (L516) and Area B (Passage Rooms) (L211).[58] The bathtubs in the rectangular alcoves in Area D (the Hall of Fountains) were also filled and covered by Phase II floors (L423, L420, L435, L439).[59] The Eudocia inscription (number 49) was found *in situ* in Area D, and a dedicatory inscription of the emperor Anastasius (number 50) was found amid the ceiling and wall collapse in this hall, where it had apparently fallen.[60]

All of the above loci were sealed by floors that Hirschfeld associated with Phase II (the Byzantine reconstruction after the earthquake of 455). However, a mid-5th-century date is contradicted by the finds, and in particular the coins, pottery and oil lamps. The coins from L305 include five specimens of Justin II, 63 Byzantine nummi of the 5th to 6th centuries, two Byzantine folles, and two post-reform Umayyad coins.[61] The coins from L313 include three specimens of Anastasius I, one of Justin I (518–27), one of Justinian I, one of Justin II, one of an unidentified 5th–6th-century ruler, 521 nummi of the 5th to 6th centuries, and seven Byzantine folles.[62] Rachel Barkay observed that, "The latest coins are from the last quarter of the sixth century."[63] The southern bathtub in Area C (L321) yielded one coin of Anastasius I and a post-reform Umayyad coin.[64] L420 (a bathtub in Area D) yielded one coin of Justin II (574/77).[65]

A large number of inscriptions were set into the floor of Area E, named the "Hall of Inscriptions" by the excavators.[66] The inscription (number 2) dated to the year 455 was set into the floor just in front of the entrance to the hall, on the north side.[67] A large rectangular pool (L516) occupied the southern half of the hall.[68] The pool in Area E

57 Hirschfeld 1997: 70, 125.

58 Hirschfeld 1997: 70–71, 125 (Area C); 75, 79, 128 (Area E); 83, 132 (Area B, where Hirschfeld notes that the fill of the pool [L211] contained many artifacts, including "a large trove of lamps and coins").

59 Hirschfeld 1997: 135.

60 Hirschfeld 1997: 138.

61 Barkay 1997: 282–3; Amitai-Preiss and Berman 1997: 309.

62 Barkay 1997: 281–2, who describes the context of these coins as "below the fifth century floor, dated according to inscriptions."

63 Barkay 1997: 282.

64 Barkay 1997: 284; Amitai-Preiss and Berman 1997: 302 (no. 99, Series J).

65 Barkay 1997: 287.

66 Hirschfeld 1997: 73.

67 Hirschfeld 1997: 130; di Segni 1997: 189.

68 Hirschfeld 1997: 73.

(L516) was covered by a Phase II pavement, which the excavators associated with changes and repairs after the mid-fifth century earthquake. However, Hirschfeld admitted that, "We are not sure whether the floor above the pool is a continuation of the original floor at the northern end of the hall or whether the entire floor dates from the year 455 C.E."[69] Indeed, the finds from the pool indicate that the floor in this part of the hall was laid much later than the mid-5th century. The latest coins from L516 include three issues of Justin II (565–78), 49 Byzantine nummi, five Byzantine folles, and one post-reform Umayyad coin.[70] Some bilanceolate lamp fragments were also found in L516, which, as Tania Coen Uzzielli notes, date to the 4th to 6th centuries.[71]

In Area B (the Passage Rooms), a new floor (L201 and 205) was laid in Phase II which covered the entire area and connected with the floors in adjacent Areas C and E.[72] Hirschfeld states that, "The artifacts found beneath the floor date it to the mid-fifth century," but on the next page contradicts this observation: "beneath [the bedding for the late floor in L201] is a brown earthen fill [L211] rich in finds, including coins, clay lamps, etc. The coins range from the time of Diocletian (end of the third century) to the reign of Justinian II (565-578) (*sic!*). Similar numismatic finds were discovered beneath the floors of the adjacent halls (E and C); as noted above, this material could lead one to assign a late date to the laying of the floor – the end of the sixth century; however, we believe that it was laid in the mid-fifth century and later underwent repairs and renovations."[73] However, whereas the pavement in adjacent L 205 shows clear evidence of later modifications, no such signs are visible in the Phase II pavement in the western part of the room (L201).[74] The coins from L211 include one of Anastasius I (491–518), two of Justinian I (527–65), and two of Justin II (565–78).[75] A large number of bilanceolate oil lamps and "elongated" oil lamps were also found in L211.[76]

The ceramic evidence is consistent with the coins from these loci. The closely datable pottery from these loci (L211, 313, 321, and 516) includes examples of Late Roman "C" Form 3 (as Ben-Arieh notes, late variants dating to the 6th century), Cypriot Red Slip Ware Form 9, dating from the mid-6th to late 7th century, and African Red Slip Ware Form 91, dated mid-5th to 6th century.[77] Roni Ben-Arieh dismisses this pottery as "intrusive": "Stratigraphic disturbances caused by subsequent occupation, as well as the earthquake in 749 C.E., resulted in the penetration of this later material beneath the floor."[78] Similarly, Hirschfeld noted that, "The rich finds beneath the Byzantine floor (L.313) include coins from different periods, the earliest one dating from the mid-3rd

69 Hirschfeld 1997: 128.

70 Barkay 1997: 287–9; Amitai-Preiss 1997: 313 (no. 141).

71 Coen Uzzielli 1997: 320.

72 Hirschfeld 1997: 132.

73 Hirschfeld 1997: 132–3; the reference should be to Justin II instead of Justinian II.

74 Hirschfeld 1997: 133, Figure 189 (L205); 132, Figure 188 (plan of Area B).

75 Barkay 1997: 279–81.

76 Coen Uzzielli 1997: 320, 323.

77 See Ben-Arieh 1997: 359–60; Pl. V: 14–25.

78 Ben-Arieh 1997: 356.

century and the latest from the time of Justinian II (565–78) (*sic!*). In principle, on the basis of the latter coin, we should date the floor to the second half of the 6th century, since the latest find is the determinant. However, this late date is not in accord with the dating of the floor, as noted above, to the mid-5th century. A possible explanation for this discrepancy is that although the floor was laid in the 5th century, following the earthquake mentioned in inscription no. 1, it underwent several modifications and renovations in later phases of its existence."[79] However, nowhere else in the report are such disturbances described. To the contrary, even in Area C, where the flagstone pavement was not uniform, the excavators remark that "there is no apparent loosening of the contact between the pavement and its foundation and even small fragments have remained in place."[80] Furthermore, whereas later intrusions or modifications might explain the presence of some later finds in a few spots, these loci all yielded homogeneous material: large quantities of coins and pottery dating to the 6th to 7th centuries, not isolated examples.

This evidence indicates that Hirschfeld's Phase II dates to the Umayyad period instead of to the Byzantine period. But does Phase II date to the 7th century or to the 8th century? The presence of only four post-reform Umayyad coins in the loci reviewed above and absence of clearly 8th-century ceramic types among the published pottery leave open the possibility that Phase II dates to the 7th century (in which case the four post-reform Umayyad coins would be intrusive). In this case the Phase II renovations might have been carried out after the earthquake of 660, which according to literary sources affected the Jordan Valley.[81] An earthquake in 660 would account for the repairs documented by a Greek inscription of 662, which was found set into an alcove in the Hall of Fountains (Area D): "In the days of Abdallah Mu`awiya, the commander of the faithful, the *clibanus* of the (baths) here was cleared and renewed by Abdallah son of Abu Hashim (or Abu `Asim), the governor, in the month of December, on the fifth day, Monday, in the 6th (year) of the indiction in the year 726 of the colony, according to the Arabs the 42nd year, for the healing of the sick, under the care of John the Gadarene, the steward."[82] The pavement in the alcove immediately below this inscription was covered with Arabic graffiti, though it is not clear whether this pavement was laid at a later date.[83] One of the inscriptions is dated to the year 740 C.E.[84] If the four post-reform Umayyad coins are not intrusive, the Phase II renovations could be associated with the earthquake of 749. In this case the repairs documented by Mu`awiya's inscription were carried out with no connection to the earthquake of 660.

To which earthquake does inscription number 1 refer? The latest coins sealed under this floor (L313) date to the late 6th century. Therefore the inscription probably refers to the earthquake of 660, not that of 445. An earlier date is possible if the inscription

79 Hirschfeld 1997: 127; also see 133.

80 Hirschfeld 1997: 32.

81 See Russell 1985: 46–7.

82 di Segni 1997: 239.

83 See Amitai-Preiss 1997: 267–8.

84 Amitai-Preiss 1997: 272.

was reset (reused) in a later floor, although this is not indicated in the excavation report. Either way, the Phase II renovations date to the Umayyad period. This means that any inscriptions associated with Phase II floors have a significantly different historical context than originally supposed and should be re-evaluated.

Now let us consider the chronology of Phase III, which Hirschfeld dated to the Umayyad period. According to Hirschfeld, "The Umayyad period at Hammat Gader is characterized by a systematic blocking of passages and narrowing of architectural spaces. The Umayyad remains are relatively easily identifiable as the latest stage of construction prior to the complete destruction of the baths complex in 749."[85] Hirschfeld assigned to Phase III the blocking of passages linking Area H with Areas C and E. He stated that, "The finds on the pavement of the entrance corridor (L. 803) included coins and artifacts dating to the late Byzantine and Umayyad periods."[86] In Area C (the Hall of Piers) a Phase III stone floor (L302) was laid above the original floor and a new wall was erected (W27) which had doorways leading to three small cells (L310, 311, 312).[87] According to Hirschfeld, the fill below floor L302 "contained large quantities of potsherds, glass, and coins. The latest coins date to the beginning of the early Arab period, leading us to conclude that this stage of the floor was laid in the Umayyad period. This is corroborated by the lamps and potsherds dating to the Umayyad period."[88] Hirschfeld describes finding "Umayyad" vessels sunk into the plaster floor of the middle cell (L311) and an "Umayyad" oil lamp under the bedding of the floor in cell L312.[89]

One 7th-century Arab-Byzantine coin and 29 post-reform Umayyad coins are published from L302.[90] The oil lamps include a "pentagonal elongated lamp" from L312,[91] and "Islamic lamps" of the channel-nozzle type from L311 and 302.[92] The pointed bodies and high knob handles of the latter indicate an 8th- to 9th-century date.[93] In fact, one lamp from L311 should be dated to the 9th or 10th century, as indicated by its short, round body and high tongue handle.[94]

Hirschfeld also assigned to Phase III the blocking of three passageways between Areas C and E, illustrated by a photograph of "late walls" between the piers of W7.[95] In the locus list, W511 is described as the "dismantling of [the] blocking wall (W103) between the southern piers of W7."[96] According to Hirschfeld these late walls and other features

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85 Hirschfeld 1997: 144.

86 Hirschfeld 1997: 144.

87 Hirschfeld 1997: 144–6.

88 Hirschfeld 1997: 146.

89 Hirschfeld 1997: 146–7.

90 Amitai-Preiss and Berman 1997: 307–9.

91 Presumably the lamp found under the bedding of the floor; see Coen Uzzielli 1997: 333, Pl. V:4.

92 Coen Uzzielli 1997: 336–8, Pls. VIII: 1; IX: 2, 4; X: 2.

93 See Stacey 2004: 150–53, Forms 1B–1C, dated ca. 725/50–875/900.

94 See Coen Uzzielli 1997: 338, Pl. X: 2.

95 Hirschfeld 1997: 147, Figure 217.

96 Hirschfeld 1997: 486.

of Phase III were found "buried" beneath the building's collapse, which he attributed to the earthquake of 749.[97] However, the pottery published from L511 includes buff ware and glazed bowls of 9th- to 10th-century date.[98] Therefore the building's collapse must postdate the earthquake of 749, and Phase III should be assigned to the 9th and 10th centuries. Hirschfeld notes that the installation of new pipes in Area E in this phase reflects a substantial investment to keep the bath complex's water system operating.[99]

In Area B (the Passage Rooms), a stone pavement of Phase II in the western room (L201) was overlaid by a "late plaster floor" (L200) of Phase IV, which Hirschfeld dates to the Abbasid-Fatimid period (that is, post-earthquake of 749). This late plaster floor was laid over stones in secondary use that served as its bedding.[100] The Phase III occupation is associated with pipes and channels that cut through the stone pavement of Phase II, and with a bathtub installed on top of the Phase II floor.[101] L200 (Phase IV) yielded four Ayyubid-Mamluke coins (late 12th/13th centuries).[102] In L201 (Phase III), one 7th-century Arab-Byzantine coin and 17 post-reform Umayyad coins were found.[103] The oil lamps illustrated from L201 include one "pear-shaped elongated oil lamp" and an "Islamic" channel-nozzle lamp.[104] Glazed wheel-made oil lamps are published from L201 and L200.[105] This type dates to the 10th and 11th centuries.[106] The pottery from L201 includes a glazed bowl of the 9th to 10th centuries.[107] Pottery of 9th- to 10th-century date is published from L200, but this locus also yielded 13th-century handmade painted ware, glazed wares, and "grenades" (sphero-conical vessels).[108]

A "late floor" (L204) of Phase IV associated with a baking oven and an intact basalt mortar was discovered in the eastern room of Area B.[109] The pottery from L204 includes a lead-glazed frying pan, buff wares, handmade painted ware, and glazed, slip-painted bowls.[110] Therefore the Phase III occupation postdates the earthquake of 749 and should be assigned to the Abbasid-Fatimid period. The Phase IV occupation dates to the 13th century.

97 Hirschfeld 1997: 148.

98 See Boas 1997: 384, Pl. I: 17, 25 (buff ware); 390, Pl. III: 3, 5, 7, 11–14 (glazed bowls).

99 Hirschfeld 1997: 149.

100 Hirschfeld 1997: 159.

101 Hirschfeld 1997: 152–3.

102 Amitai-Preiss and Berman 1997: 303.

103 Amitai-Preiss and Berman 1997: 303–5.

104 See Coen Uzzielli 1997: 333, Pl. V: 3; 337, Pl. IX: 1, which is Stacey's Form 1B, dated to ca. 725–875 (see Stacey 2004: 150).

105 Coen Uzzielli 1997: 339, Pl. XI: 3, 5.

106 See Stacey 2004: 165–6.

107 Boas 1997: 390, Pl. III: 10.

108 Boas 1994: 388, Pl. II: 8, 11 (handmade painted ware); 390, Pl. III: 2 (glazed wares); 393, Pl. IV:14–15 ("grenades").

109 Hirschfeld 1997: 159.

110 Boas 1997: 384, Pl. I: 13 (lead-glazed frying pan); 384, Pl. I: 16, 24, 26 (buff wares); 388, Pl. II: 3, 4, 6 (handmade painted ware); 393, Pl. IV: 4, 7 (glazed, slip-painted bowls).

According to Hirschfeld, the Phase III occupation was "found 'buried' beneath the massive debris of the building. The superstructures of the hall's walls and its ceiling collapsed directly onto the floors during the earthquake of 749."[111] However, since Phase III dates to the Abbasid-Fatimid periods, the collapse of the superstructure could not have been caused by the earthquake of 749. Perhaps the damage should be attributed to the earthquake of 1033, which seems to have affected Tiberias as well.[112]

Conclusion

The two sites discussed here show no evidence of the dramatic decline which many scholars believe affected Palestine during the Abbasid period. This decline is often linked to damage caused by the earthquake of 749. However, it is not clear whether this earthquake caused significant damage to the monumental buildings around the Haram in Jerusalem. Whether it did or not, occupation of these buildings continued into the Abbasid period. Substantial resources were invested to repair the bath complex at Hammath Tiberias after it suffered damage in the earthquake of 660 or 749. At both sites there is evidence for intensive occupation until the earthquake of 1033 – that is, through the Abbasid and Fatimid periods.

The misdating of remains at Hammath Tiberias is the result of several factors. First, Hirschfeld seems to have assumed that the Umayyad period is characterized by decline, as reflected in his description of the remains. For example, the section on the Umayyad period (Phase III) remains begins "The Umayyad period at Hammat Gader is characterized by a systematic blocking of passages and narrowing of architectural spaces."[113] Remains associated by Hirschfeld with the Umayyad period (Phase III) frequently are categorized in negative terms such as "inferior quality of the walls,"[114] "haphazardly built," "roughly built," and "crude."[115] As we have seen, Phase (III) should be dated to the Abbasid-Fatimid period. Second, the dating of the phases seems to be based almost entirely on the Greek inscriptions. The archaeological evidence – that is, the associated coins, pottery, and oil lamps – was ignored or dismissed. The focus on inscriptions erases periods when the epigraphic habit declined or disappeared. The third point concerns the numismatic evidence. Of the 1200 Muslim coins recovered, only 165 could be identified. All are from the Umayyad period (7th century and post-reform) except for two Abbasid coins, three Ayyubid coins, and one Mamluke coin. Therefore, the substantial Abbasid-Fatimid period occupation (Phase III) is not reflected in the coin record. Hammath Gader provides additional evidence of a common phenomenon: Umayyad coins continued to circulate during the Abbasid period, whereas Abbasid

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111 Hirschfeld 1997: 148.

112 See Stacey 2004: 8 for a discussion.

113 Hirschfeld 1997: 144.

114 Hirschfeld 1997: 144.

115 Hirschfeld 1997: 147–8.

coins are rare. A similar phenomenon characterizes the 5th century.[116] In such cases an over-reliance on the numismatic record can lead to the misdating of associated remains.

NB: Prag's recent publication of Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in Jerusalem appeared in print after this article went to press. See J. Magness, in *BASOR* 357 (2010), 98–101 (review of K. Prag, *Excavations by K. M. Kenyon in Jerusalem 1961–1967*, V: *Discoveries in Hellenistic to Ottoman Jerusalem: Centenary Volume: Kathleen M. Kenyon, 1906–1978*. Oxford: Oxbow, 2008)

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[116] For a discussion and references see Magness 2001: 29–30 n. 76; also see Bijovsky 2000–2002.

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Chapter 8

Late Antique Legacies and Muslim Economic Expansion

Jairus Banaji

In a sketch compressed into some fifty pages of *L'Islam dans sa première grandeur*, lectures that he himself never wrote up for publication, Maurice Lombard underlined the rapid economic development of the Muslim world as well as its resulting social tensions. He was especially interested in the way the conquests and the formation of the new state could build on the vast accumulations of gold that had been progressively drained from countries further west and stashed in massive hoards both in the eastern Byzantine provinces and in the treasuries of the Sasanian rulers. What Islam did was release the bulk of this hoard into circulation, with predictable consequences. Moreover, "the establishment of the Muslim world in the 7th to early 8th centuries created a vast integrated area, a huge common market stretching from central Asia to the Indian ocean, from the Sudan to the barbarian West and the region of the Russian rivers".[1] For Lombard, economic integration and the increase in money circulation were thus central parts of the story. Ehrenkreutz's paper of 1972, a contribution to the Pirenne debate, was equally prescient. Like Lombard, he saw the first centuries of Islam as a "new and dynamic era in the history of Near Eastern economy" that was possible, to start with, because of what he called the "non-destructive character of the great conquest".[2] Of course, the ruling elites of the two empires that the Arabs confronted were "expelled or exterminated",[3] but no substantial losses were inflicted on the tax-paying civilian population, he claimed. For him the most significant features, on the economic side, were "a powerful injection of ready cash into the Near Eastern economy",[4] the growth of new consumer centres in the regions themselves, and the strong economic expansion that offset the potential inflationary effects of the vast supply of money. Ehrenkreutz was hardly a Marxist, far from it, but like Marx he saw the volume of money in circulation as regulated by the state of the economy.[5] "Although the supply of new coins assumed

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[1] Lombard 1971: 123. I doubt I could have put this paper together without Patricia Crone's detailed comments and advice on an earlier draft and am deeply indebted to her. I am also grateful to Michael Morony for some fascinating comments.

[2] Ehrenkreutz 1972: 99.

[3] Ehrenkreutz 1972: 100.

[4] Ehrenkreutz 1972: 101.

[5] E.g., "[The] decision of the Arab administration to release vast quantities of gold (*dīnār*), silver (*dirham*), and copper (*fals*) coins...must have been made in response to expanding market

tremendous proportions, and although their production kept on being expanded during the early Caliphate, no inflationary developments were set off by such a monetary policy".[6] This, Ehrenkreutz rightly concluded, pointed to the "great vitality of the Near Eastern market in that period".

What I want to do in this paper is build on this model by suggesting the possible way in which the late antique economic background contributed to the vitality Ehrenkreutz speaks of, and looking specifically at three issues or sets of issues. The first is the general issue of what happened to the aristocracies of the East Roman and Sasanian empires following the Arab invasions of the 630s and early 640s. Chris Wickham's new book presents a picture that is remarkably continuitist on this question, much more so for the east than for the west, so it's worth looking at the evidence more closely.[7] Second, if the early Muslim economy can be said to have built on late antique legacies, which ones were those? And finally, how or at what level were those legacies transformed and developed into something new? Where, in other words, can we identify the seeds of a new type of evolution within the social and economic world of the Caliphate?

How, to begin with, did the aristocracies respond to the invasions? It is surprising how little attention historians have paid to this issue. It might help to look at the Byzantine and Sasanian aristocracies as a group, ignoring the political distinction between them, and to keep the aristocracy proper distinct from the smaller town or village level elites who may have formed a minor nobility. In that perspective, aristocratic responses can be strung along a spectrum from resistance at one end to flight at the other, with economic bargaining and capitulation wedged between them. The best examples of resistance come from the Iranian side, with both Qādisiyya (638) and Nihāwand (642) decimating the ranks of the Sasanian aristocracy, which on the whole simply disappeared.[8] The most dramatic example of flight is Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's reference to some 30,000 individuals from the Alexandrian governing class (*ahl al-quwwa*) – a substantial number even if not precisely this one – loading their families and moveables onto ships and fleeing.[9] The most successful case of economic bargaining was undoubtedly the ability of the North African aristocracy, especially the large landowners of Byzacena, still formally controlled by Byzantium, to buy off the Arab armies under ʿAbdallāh b. Saʿd b. Abī Sarḥ (this in 647) by coming up with an astonishing sum of money that the sources put between just over 2,000,000 and 2,500,000 solidi.[10] Ibn Abī Sarḥ evacuated Tunisia. Carthage only finally fell c. 695, and the strong resistance the Arabs encountered here in the intervening

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conditions", Ehrenkreutz 1989: 124.

[6] Ehrenkreutz 1972: 103.

[7] Wickham 2005.

[8] Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, 122, listing the groups at Qādisiyya. Note Sebeos' valuable ref. to this battle, "All the leading nobles were killed, and the general Ṙostom was also killed", *Armenian History*, 137 (98–9).

[9] Some time around September 642 when the commander-in-chief Theodore (*PLRE* IIIB, 1280ff.) abandoned the city. Flight: Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 82, l.15–16.

[10] Al-Wāqidī gave both figures, e.g., Ṭabarī, ser. i, 2818, l.2ff. = vol. xv, 23, cf. Slim 1982. The defeat at Sbeïtla led to a panic dispersal of the Byzantine forces, a major part of which regrouped

decades came not from the landowners but from the Berber tribes in the Aures, led by the Kahena. Finally, the Armenian aristocracy exemplifies both internal divisions and eventual capitulation.[11] To return to Iran, there is an interesting passage in Dīnawarī that suggests a clear division between the *dahāqīn* (the small-town or village elite) and the aristocracy proper. He tells us that when the remnants of the Sasanian army fled to Madā'in/Ctesiphon following the defeat at Qādisiyya and the Arab forces subjected the capital to a protracted siege from the west bank of the Tigris, most of the *dahāqīn* of the surrounding rural areas couldn't take the strain and decided to capitulate.[12] Indeed, the clearest pattern during the conquests is the extremely sharp division between the imperial aristocracies and the local elites. There was scarcely any resistance from the latter, and not just because they lacked the military capability.

Nihāwand broke the resistance of the Sasanian aristocracy and only local concentrations of aristocrats could have survived after that. For example, the assault on Iṣṭakhr by ʿAbdallāh b. ʿĀmir, a cousin of ʿUthmān, some time in the late 640s involved considerable slaughter, "wiping out most of the noble families (*akhthar ahl al-buyutat*)" in the words of Balādhurī,[13] and recalling the much earlier siege of Šuštar/Tustar, where some 600 (noble?) captives were, reportedly, beheaded.[14] The upshot of all this is that the conquests "took out" the aristocracy, exterminating or dispersing it, and that only the minor nobility, if one can call it that, survived in any substantial way.[15] In Egypt there is no reference in the surviving 7th-century papyri to the great *oikoi* of the Byzantine period, and the only true aristocrat known to me to have survived into the 650s – clearly as a collaborator – was Flavius Theodorakios, who was *illustris kai pagarchos* in 651 but seems to have started life as the son of a *scholasticus* already in possession of a large estate (*ousia*) in 629.[16] In Iran, claims to descent from the aristocratic families of the Sasanian period only go to highlight the rupture, because if a substantial section of the old aristocracy *had* survived, we would not have remnants of it proclaiming their descent from the old houses.[17]

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at Thysdrus, where the treaty was concluded. Ironically, the best material is contained in the latest sources, Ibn al-Athīr, Tidjānī and al-Nuwairī, cf. Slim, *art. cit*. 84–6.

11 Drasxanakertcʿi, *History*, 101 (divisions), 103 (capitulation), and the defection of leading aristocrats in Sebeos, *Armenian History*, 169 (142–3), 173 (149). Capitulation in Egypt too, cf. Dionysius of Tel-Maḥré in Palmer 1993: 159

12 Dīnawarī, *K. al-akhbār*, 133; cf. Ṭabarī, ser. i, 2427 = vol. xiii, 9 for a contrast between the local *dehqāns* and the entourage of the ruler.

13 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 382 = *Origins*, 2, 133.

14 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 373 = *Origins*, 2, 117.

15 Cf. Kennedy 2004a: 72, on Fars, "where the prolonged fighting and the defeat of subsequent rebellions led to the virtual extermination of the ancient aristocracy".

16 *CPR* XXIV 32 (4.5.651); *CPR* VII 51 (629) *may* relate to him. In any case, continuity (across the conquest) is established by *P. Lond*. I 113.10 (p. 222) (639/40), *Ross.-Georg*. III 50 (21.7.643), and *BGU* I 320 (9.2.644; *BL* xi.17).

17 Tafazzoli 2000: 43 refers to the "defeat of the Persian army in the time of ʿUmar and the gradual disappearance of the nobles who administered the country", distinguishing them from the "local gentry".

The decimation/dispersion of the aristocracy in the Arab conquests is simply a way of saying that the Muslim armies smashed the state in those territories. This does not mean that substantial damage was inflicted on the infrastructure, it wasn't – the urban structure was largely unscathed[18] – and there is no archaeological evidence of a major catastrophe in the 7th-century East Mediterranean.[19] Nor was the economy of either empire substantially affected in a negative way. The most striking proof of this is the continued existence of a monetary economy across the great watershed of the conquests. This was by far the strongest element of continuity between late antiquity and early Islam or between late Roman/Sasanian late antiquity and the late antiquity of Islam and the key factor that allowed for the "prodigious urban expansion" of the 8th to 11th centuries. Certainly, at the economic level, the single most enduring legacy of the Late Antique world was the continued use of money and its availability in substantial quantities. A peculiarly Muslim gold coinage was of course only struck from AH 77 (696/97), so all references to the "dinar" for transactions before this period were effectively references to the solidus, and the same is true of "dirhams" and the Sasanian silver coinage based on the drahm. These coins continued to circulate in vast quantities,[20] and certainly there is no indication that the supply of money was a constraint or *any* sort of constraint on the financial system of the emerging Muslim state. Taxes were denominated in money, and so were the salaries/pensions of the *muqātila* settled in the *amsār*. This transition was seamless, and the obvious reason, I suggest, is that from the 640s at least the new regime was controlled by an elite, the Quraysh, who had long been accustomed to using both solidi and drahms in their commercial dealings. There is the well-known passage in Balādhurī which tells us that "The *dinars* of Heraclius used to be current among the people of Mecca before Muslim times, and also the *baghliyah* dirhams of Persia; but it was not customary to buy and sell with them except by considering the coins as bullion."[21] Less well known is an equally interesting reference in al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-nizāʿ wa-t-takhāsum* which states that in the *jāhiliyya* the Quraysh "used to vie with each other in supplying the pilgrims with the necessities of life, these being a group of rich men. Each individual of this group might at times send along 100 *mithqāls*' weight of gold coins of the Emperor Heraclius".[22] The *mithqāl jāhilī*[23] would of course have been the weight of the solidus, so the amount mentioned here would have been equal to 100 solidi.[24]

18 Walmsley 2000: 273.

19 Walmsley 2000: 268.

20 For the continued circulation of solidi, see the late 7th-century hoards published in Morrisson 1972, Metcalf 1980, Bijovsky 2002.

21 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 466 (de Goeje) = *Origins*, 2, 263.

22 Maqrīzī, *Kitab al-nizāʿ*, 49.

23 Ṭabarī, ser. ii, 939, l.12ff. = vol. xxii, 91–2.

24 Wāqidī, *K. al-maghāzī*, 27–8, cites figures for the amounts of gold (*mithqāl*) invested in the Quraysh-controlled caravan trade to Gaza. The *mithqāl* of "22 carats less a fraction (*kasr*)" (Balādhurī, loc. cit.) or "22 carats minus a *ḥabbah*" (Ṭabarī, loc. cit.) was the weight of the solidus (4.5479g), cf. Ṭabarī, ser. ii, 940, citing Saʿīd b. al-Musayyab, "It is by the Syrian [weight] that dīnārs are struck, and that was the weight of the [earlier] dīnārs before [ʿAbd al-Malik's] dīnārs

The core of the new political elite that emerged in ʿUthmān's time were the already affluent landed or commercial members of the Quraysh, mostly Umayyad, and their progressive and rapid marginalisation of the so-called theocratic group was a major cause of the tensions that exploded in the 650s.[25] Vast fortunes were accumulated at rapid speed.[26] According to Masʿūdī, ʿUthmān himself left behind liquid assets of 150,000 dinars (read: solidi) and 1 million drahms.[27] There was no restriction on the sale of *kharāj* land,[28] and the sheer scale of liquid assets available to members of the elite, especially Quraysh, would have buoyed an active market in land that was largely driven by speculation and re-development.[29] There is little doubt that the acquisition of estates began in a big way with ʿUthmān. He is accused of privatising vast tracts of land in Iraq that had been confiscated following the decimation of the aristocracy and the flight of the royal family and clergy, land which was effectively ownerless. But this conflates the build up of private estates in the Sawad with Muʿāwiya's privatisation of the *sawāfī*. "The setting aside and registration of the *sawāfī* took place during the caliphate of Muʿāwiya",[30] whereas the issue that badly backfired in ʿUthmān's caliphate was a land exchange scheme that enabled the Madinan elite to buy lucrative estates in Iraq in exchange for properties in the Hijāz and southern Arabia.[31] Al-Māwardī tells us that these "concessions" yielded some 50 mn dirhams, "some of which he [ʿUthman] offered as gifts and donations".[32]

ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Durī's characterisation of the late Umayyad elite as an "acquisitive aristocracy" is surely true of the whole Umayyad period.[33] Muʿāwiya's massive acquisitions and investments in Madina,[34] his investments in Mecca and al-Tā'if,[35]

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were struck; they were twenty-two *qīrāṭ* minus a *ḥabbah*". The Syrian carat/*qīrāṭ* of 0.2125g **x** 21.4 = 4.547g, cf. Miles 1964: 86, and the slightly different calculation in Grierson 1960: 254.

25 See Hinds 1972, Rotter 1982: 16ff., 30ff.

26 See esp. Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, iv, 253-55. ʿAbdallāh b. Masʿūd, al-Zubayr b. al-ʿAwwām, Zayd b. Thābit and Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ were among the Companions of the Prophet who left substantial fortunes (Ibn Masʿūd 90,000 *mithqāls*, Kister 1991: 275, citing al-Dhahabī; al-Zubayr forty million dirhams, Ṭabarī, vol. xxxix, 27; the last two at least 100,000 dinars, Yaʿqūbī, *Mushākalat*, 335, Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, iv, 255). ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ' assets at the time of his death were valued at well over a million "dinars", cf. Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, v, 61, Maqdisī, *K. al-bad'*, 6, 3. ʿUthmān's caliphate recalls the reign of Constantine in its rapid enrichment of an emerging elite, except that this one was more tightly structured around kin and close associates, see Madelung 1996: 81ff. and the characterization in Crone 1980: 32, 40, 43, esp. "the affinal character of the Sufyanid state".

27 Masʿūdī *Murūj*, iv, 253, so too Yaʿqūbī, *Mushākalat* , 334.

28 Dūrī 1979: 99.

29 Cf. El-Ali 1959.

30 Madelung 1996: 372–3.

31 Ṭabarī, ser. i, 2854-5 = vol. xv, 59–61, and Hinds 1996: 18–19.

32 Mawardī, *Aḥkām*, 211.

33 Dūrī 1969: 11.

34 Kister 1977: 42–3.

35 Kister 1972: 84–6; 1979: 13–14, 17.

his draining of the marsh land in southern Iraq,[36] and the systematic way in which he seems to have gone about establishing the true extent of the former Crown lands in Iraq, treating them as a personal fief and massively boosting their revenues, all reflect a kind of political entrepreneurialism rooted in the aristocratic traditions of the late antique East Mediterranean and the *jāhilīyya*. In Mecca alone Muʿāwiya must have spent close to a quarter of a million drahms buying up real estate, especially the *diyār* (sing. *dār*, "mansions", "courts", "buildings"), e.g., just one transaction well-attested in the sources involved 45,000 dinars (solidi). As Kister notes, "In some of the courts acquired by Muʿawiya there seem to have been workshops of craftsmen, stores and magazines, which secured income and profit".[37] Most of these real estate transactions look like straightforward commercial purchases (the verb used is شرى, *šarā*, form VIII "to buy, purchase; buy up, acquire"), but in Madīna he acquired land through distress sales, the Anṣārīs and others complaining that "Muʿāwiya bought (our land) for a hundredth of its (real) value",[38] and in al-Tā'if he tried to get ʿAmr b.al-ʿAṣ to give up his massive vineyard al-Wahṭ, reportedly for no consideration whatever. ʿAmr of course refused.[39] He gave Yazīd his son a village in the Fayyum (*fa-aqṭaʿa Muʿāwiya ayḍan Yazīda qaryatan min qurā al-Fayyūm*), but there were strong protests and the land was returned to *kharāj*.[40] This by the way is one of our first references to the possible private ownership of *villages* in Egypt. The most damaging accusation by far is that Muʿāwiya converted *fay'* land or communal property into his private estates and was the first to do this in a decisive way. Yaʿqūbī writes that Muʿāwiya confiscated the former Sasanian royal estates and "made them his own *ṣawāfī* and gave land grants from them to all the members of his family".[41] And later, "And Muʿāwiya did in Syria, the Jazīra and the Yemen what he had done in Iraq by appropriating the estates of the former rulers and transferring them to himself (*taṣyīrihā li-nafsihi*) as his own and making land grants from them to members of his family and entourage".[42] Indeed, the conflation between *sawāfī* and the ruler's private possessions was so complete that Muʿāwiya's estates in Madīna came to be called *ṣawāfī* though Madīna, obviously, would have had no tradition of Crown property.[43]

Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān is thus the prototype of the kind of economic protagonism that was such a pronounced feature of the Marwānid period and associated with powerful elite figures such as Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik, Khālid b. ʿAbdallāh al-Qasrī, and Yazīd b. al-Muhallab al-Azdī. Maslama was willing to invest three million dirhams (and by now a purely Islamic coinage was in circulation) in repairing the breaches in the

36 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 291 = *Origins*, 1, 454, Masʿūdī, *Murūj*, i, 225–6.

37 Kister 1972: 85–6.

38 Kister 1977: 47.

39 Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, 4a, 54, l.13ff.

40 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, 101, l.15ff.

41 Yaʿqūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2, 277, l.12ff.

42 Yaʿqūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2, 278, l.7ff..

43 Kister 1977: 38–42. ʿUmar II was exceptional in seeking to restrain the alienation of State lands (*ṣawāfī*) as private estates, see the famous "rescript" in Gibb 1955, esp. 10–11.

baṭīḥa, if he could have the land for himself.[44] What we have to ask ourselves is what the reclaimed area would have been used for, and rice growing is one obvious answer. Yazīd had some 4000 buffaloes on his estates in Dijlah and Kaskar,[45] and despite the extermination of the Muhallabid family under Yazīd II[46] he seems to have bequeathed sufficient assets for just half the estates to yield a daily income of 4000 dinars to his grandson Sufyan b. Muʿāwiya b. Yazīd b. al-Muhallab.[47] And Khālid al-Qasrī's estates yielded not less than ten million dirhams annually.[48] The later seventh and early eighth centuries saw huge investments in reclamation and the revival of "dead" land.[49] The estates carved out of the reclaimed land were so lucrative that various Marwānid rulers were repeatedly tempted to confiscate them, as Yazīd II did with Yazīd b. al-Muhallab's properties.[50] Using Balādhurī's information on the *iqṭāʿāt* Michael Morony years ago gave us a superb reconstruction of the new landed elite associated with these schemes. Morony argued that their investments triggered massive agrarian development and a new form of agriculture based on "a more efficient, specialized, market-oriented monoculture on plantation estates".[51] These were industrial crops such as cotton, sugar and rice, most of them hugely labour-intensive and, since they presupposed reclamation, capital-intensive as well. This Umayyad-sponsored tradition of large-scale commercial agriculture continued into the ʿAbbāsid period, of course. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣāliḥ from a powerful Syrian family grew saffron on an irrigated estate near Ḥimṣ.[52] The innovation in contrast to late antiquity is not the emergence of a market-oriented aristocracy but the kind of crops it grew.

Lombard suggested that from the close of the 8th century "Sudanese gold injected fresh life into the Muslim economy".[53] Yet even without the "gold of the Sudan", the scale of monetary circulation was sufficient to sustain a staggering level of money taxes, especially under the Marwānids. Al-Maqrīzī cites a series of useful figures for Egyptian taxes under Hishām. ʿUbaydallāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb, Hishām's director of finance for Egypt initiated a new land survey and population census soon after his arrival there in 105/724. In what must have been the first fiscal year after that, the gross production of the country was estimated at just over 17 million dinars, a figure that impressed Maqrīzī. Of this, four million or a little under a quarter was taken in taxes, and of that amount

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44 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 292 = *Origins*, 1, 456.

45 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 172 = *Origins*, 1, 259.

46 ʿAwtabī, tr. Hinds, 73ff.

47 Ibid. 83–4.

48 Dūrī 1969: 10. Ṭabarī, ser. ii, 1655, l.5–6 = vol. xxv, 184 for twenty million as Khālid's income and for Khālid as an improving landowner, and 1658 = vol. xxv, 186–7 for the implied economic rivalry with Hishām.

49 Dūrī 1979: 102.

50 Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 362 = *Origins*, 2, 96.

51 Morony 1984: 210.

52 Yaʿqūbī, *K. al-buldān*, 324, cf. Cobb 2001: 30.

53 Lombard 1971: 116.

2.72 million (as much as 70 per cent!!) was despatched to the treasury in Damascus.[54] One has the impression that four million was about the *most* Egypt could yield in taxes even under sound financial management. Contrast that with Iraq. If we take 120 million dirhams as Iraq's average revenue, under the Umayyads (and not including Khuzistan), and divide by 12 to obtain the dinar equivalent, this gives us ten million dinars or two and a half times more than Egypt! In short, Iraq was crucial, the most productive and probably the most heavily taxed province, and this is one background against which we might view both the very substantial investments that went into the Iraqi countryside and the building of a new capital at Baghdād. Fars and Jibāl were the next most heavily taxed regions under Muʿāwiya with tax levels of 70 million drahms each. By contrast, Syria seems to have been under-taxed, perhaps deliberately, since its yield was just 1.88 million dinars.[55]

The money taxation of the Umayyad period was essentially the culmination of a late antique tax system that had its roots in the massive monetary expansion of the 4th to 6th centuries[56] and had formed the backbone of the fiscal systems of both Justinian I and Khusrō I. The essence of this system was a fixed monetary demand on the tax-payer assessed on the area of the holding or the number of trees in the case of tree crops. Abū Yūsuf, who discusses the drawbacks of *misāḥa*, criticised it for lacking the flexibility to match the constant and unpredictable fluctuation of prices. The general implication is that the efficiency of the Umayyad fiscal system depended on the market; in other words, the amount of revenue collected would fluctuate according to the state of the market.[57] But *misāḥa* also worked to the detriment of the peasantry: a system structured to enforce fixed cash payments with no allowance for the season would mean that peasants would *have* to offload stocks in the immediate post-harvest period, thus driving prices down and, especially in good seasons, generating a downward spiral of further disbursements and further deflation.[58] Abū Yūsuf or rather the redactors of the *Kitāb al-kharāj*[59] refer to this mechanism in one ḥadīth in which ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz is reported as saying: "My predecessors used to charge the *dhimmīs* with more taxes than they could bear, forcing them thereby to sell their crops at low prices to pay the taxes. However I am not charging anyone with more than he can bear and no one is pressed to sell his crops at cheap prices."[60]

The upshot of this kind of fiscally-induced mechanism was that many peasants (non-Arabs) simply abandoned agriculture and either fled or drifted to the towns. The

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54 Maqrīzī, *Description*, 283–4.

55 Yaʿqūbī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2, 277, Mawardī, *Aḥkām*, 192, and Rotter 1982: 61–2.

56 Banaji 2007, ch. 3.

57 E.g., the reason why al-Maqrīzī was so impressed that ʿUbaydallāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb could extract four million dinars from Egypt following his land survey is that *prices* were low at the time.

58 Banaji 2007: 84ff.

59 Calder 1993, ch. 6.

60 Abū Yūsuf, tr. Ben Shemesh, 90. So too in the later Roman empire, cf. Ammianus Marcellinus 16.5.15.

Marwānid restoration meant a stronger state and the drive to tax more efficiently, so the exodus from the countryside swelled in those years.[61] Ibn Rusta refers to al-Hajjāj b. Yūsuf's "oppression and despotism" (*li-ẓulmi wa-ʿasfihi*) causing a dramatic collapse of the revenues of the *Sawād* to just 18 million dirhams.[62] In 1938 Lionel Casson collated all the data on Aphrodito's taxes into a time series covering the years 698–722. The staggering feature of the series is the sheer level of *money* taxes the Marwānids wanted from this small district, an annual assessment of almost 7000 dinars. Aphrodito of course was in Middle Egypt, at some distance from Iraq, but here too the taxes showed substantial arrears, with collections running at an average of some 60 per cent.[63] And of course the papyri from Aphrodito are full of references to a fugitive peasantry whom the governor Qurra b. Sharīk wanted tracked down and returned to their villages. This is a good example of the documentary evidence supporting the *adab* sources.

Now there seem to me to be two reasons why the kind of fiscal narrative that Chris Wickham has recently developed for the later Roman empire won't work for the Islamic world. First, the moment of functionality in Wickham's model resides in the movement of fiscal goods (taxes in kind) between different parts of the Mediterranean (this assumes of course that late Roman taxation was dominated by payments in kind) and the impact this had in terms of integrating the regional economies of the empire. It was the coherence of the tax system that allowed for economic integration at an empire-wide level. Now even if we assume that this is an accurate picture of the late Roman economy and taxation,[64] it cannot be applied to the Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods, since, as I have tried to suggest, their tax systems were thoroughly monetised and there was certainly no Islamic-period counterpart to the large-scale movement of fiscal goods between regions. In other words, the key factor in the model is simply missing in the Islamic world. Secondly, Wickham's minimalism, the idea that the fiscal process was "a major motor for the commercial movement of goods"[65] also doesn't work. There is a brief but striking demonstration of this in Hugh Kennedy's calculation of the likely wage bill of the early Umayyad army which he estimates at a minimum of 60 million dirhams per year.[66] Even if we double this figure and assume that 120 million dirhams was regularly absorbed by military wage costs, this is still only a fraction of the amount of money in circulation in the caliphate and of the vast amounts that the Muslim political and business elites controlled as part of their private assets.[67] This was not an economy driven by the kind of fiscal dynamic that Wickham posits for the late empire. The cash reserves of some 900 million dirhams in Hārūn al-Rashīd's treasury at the time of his

61 Cadell 1967: 118ff.

62 Ibn Rustah, *K. al-aʿlāq*, 105, l.12

63 Casson 1938, esp. 287.

64 Cf. Banaji 2007, App. 5.

65 Wickham 2005: 79.

66 Kennedy 2001: 67–8.

67 E.g., "The caliph Hishām is said to have reckoned that his property developments in the Jazīra brought in more revenue than the whole of the taxation of the empire", Kennedy 2004: 28, who also notes that "The ownership of great estates was vastly profitable".

death[68] show just how much wealth the caliphate had come to generate by the end of the 2nd/start of the 9th century. If a fiscal narrative won't work, we need to look elsewhere. Between the late antique and ʿAbbāsid periods, commercial networks were characterised by considerable continuity. This was as true of the Gulf as it was of the Red Sea, for example, Donald Whitcomb has argued (in an unpublished paper) "The idea of collapse and dramatic cessation of commerce with the Muslim conquest may be discarded in this area as well" (meaning the Persian Gulf).

Indeed, at the economic level, the most remarkable outcome of the expansion of Islam was the evolution of a well-integrated, legally and financially sophisticated business sector that formed the mainstay of economic life throughout the early centuries. That the trade to the East suffered *no* major disruption in the decades of the conquests is strongly implied in Baṣra's rapid evolution as a major commercial centre, attested, remarkably, in the so-called Short Recension of the Armenian Geography now attributed to Ananias of Širak. This recension cannot date from too long after Baṣra itself was founded, and it tells us, "Baṣra is filled with merchants and ships coming from India and all parts of the orient".[69] Now one of the most remarkable portions of the Armenian Geography is the passage relating to the limits and four great subdivisions of the Sasanian empire. This exists only in the Long Recension and was clearly taken straight from an official Sasanian document in Middle Persian. For our purposes the most interesting section is the description of *Kʿusti Nmroj* or the Southern region, which the source says contained 19 provinces, including *Maazun*, that is, Oman, and *Debuhĕl*, that is, Daybul (in Sind).[70] One reason for the continued and rapid expansion of Arab-controlled trade to the East is that the Umayyads simply took over the cosmopolitan maritime empire created over several centuries by the Sasanians,[71] and just as there is a sense in which the late antique model of a monetised tax system reached its climax in the ʿAbbāsid period, because of the role of the Umayyads in preserving it, so too did the commercial infrastructure inherited from the Sasanians reach its most developed and cosmopolitan form in the 9th and 10th centuries, when Ṣuḥār and Sīrāf were flourishing international ports, Sīrāf leading initially, and the cosmopolitanism of the Gulf ports created a religious and intellectual climate conducive to all kinds of progressive tendencies. Al-Iṣṭakhrī, writing in the early 10th century, wrote that the merchants of Fars were driven by their "passion to accumulate capital" (*maḥabbat jamaʿa al-mal*) and comments on the enormous wealth of the Sirāfī merchants.[72] Ibn Ḥauqal refers to the *ṭirāz* workshops owned by merchants at Jannābā in Arrjān: *wa hiya madīna kāna fīhā ṭuruz li'l-kuttani li'l-tujjāri*.[73] The penetration of merchant capital into production was a far more advanced process in Islam, two or three centuries ahead of the Italians. Certainly, the main Islamic forms of the *commenda*, called *muḍāraba*, *qirāḍ* or *muqāraḍa*, were already developed institutions well before the 11th

68 Ṭabarī, ser. iii, 764 = vol. xxx, 335.
69 Hewsen 1992: 71A.
70 Hewsen 1992: 72.
71 Wilkinson 1979: 893, and the background in Wilkinson 1973.
72 Iṣṭakhrī, 138, so too Ibn Ḥawqal, 290, l.9ff., elaborating.
73 Ibn Ḥauqal, 269; likewise at Jahram, 268.

century and the subject of an extensive legal literature.[74] The Ḥanafīs were especially sympathetic to the purely productive uses of the *muḍāraba*, creating legal sanction for the merchant's control of manufacturing operations. And that was how Lombard saw the Muslim merchant: "The merchant-entrepreneur founded industries, provided work, supplied the raw materials, advanced the money, and undertook to find an outlet for the products".[75] Again, *istiṣnāʿ* or the supply contracts that merchants struck with craftsmen in control of their own means of production were a prime case of the flexibility and pragmatism that could characterize Ḥanafī law in the economic field, since there was no reference to such contracts in the Qur'ān, and their endorsement implied a victory of *ijmāʿ* and *istiḥsān* over *qiyās*.[76] The conjunction of various forms of partnership with supply contracts are simply one indication of the complex ways in which businesses could be organised, and suggest a degree of complexity that was considerably beyond anything one finds in Late Antiquity. In any case, the "appearance, manufacture and rapid adoption of the Islamic Cream Ware varieties at the expense of existing pottery types" in the later 8th and early 9th centuries[77] presupposes the dominance of this kind of coordination by trading firms, just as the ʿAbbāsid polychrome glazes presume Chinese influence and regular contacts with the Far East, global networks dominated by Iraqi merchants.[78] The precocity of financial instruments is no less striking.

In short, the ʿAbbāsid period elite comprised a substantial layer of "premodern" capitalists[79] – grain merchants, textile traders, tax farmers, shipowners, moneychangers, the owners of rice and sugar plantations, or the enormously wealthy businessmen who financed the overseas trade, such as Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar Sīrāfī, the Sīrāfī financier whom Ibn Ḥawqal met in Baṣra in 350/961, whose fortune was well over two million dinars, excluding the capital invested in partnerships and the foreign goods warehoused in his *khānbārāt* and *makhāzin*.[80] The fascinating feature of the passage in which Ibn Ḥawqal describes Abū Bakr is the connection he suddenly draws between the wealthy mercantile society of Baṣra and the strength of Muʿtazilī doctrines there. Characterising this remarkable evolution has always generated some uncertainty among historians. Thus Lombard himself was careful to avoid any specific analogies. The most he said was that Muslim merchants "pooled capital resources and founded trading and banking companies", that they could "call on great capital reserves", and that "Capital was constantly ploughed back into ever more ambitious undertakings".[81] Ashtor claimed, "there can be no doubt that in the time of the ʿAbbāsids the Near Eastern economy

74 Udovitch 1970.

75 Lombard 1971: 149.

76 Pritsch and Spies 1953, Wichard 1995: 237ff.

77 Walmsley 2001: 310.

78 Anon., *Akhbār aṣ-ṣīn*, 12 (7), for Iraqi dominance; 34 (16) for the "excellent quality" of Chinese ceramics.

79 Crone 2005: 255.

80 Ibn Ḥawqal, 290–91.

81 Lombard 1971: 150.

reached the state of pre-capitalism",[82] by which he meant, clearly, the threshold of "true capitalism" but not the latter, of course. Duri wrote, "The decisive evolution that came to the fore in the Abbasid period is the expansion of trade and the emergence of a capitalist class among the merchants".[83] And Patricia Crone states, "It is well known that premodern capitalism flourished in medieval Islamic society".[84] The fact remains that however we characterise the evolution that the first two centuries of Islamic economic growth had resulted in, it was sufficiently different from the past to represent a significant advance.

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[82] Ashtor 1976: 112.

[83] Duri 1979: 178.

[84] Crone 2005: 255.

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Chapter 9

Syrian Elites from Byzantium to Islam: Survival or Extinction?

Hugh Kennedy

The Islamic conquests of the Near East[1] in the decade following the death of the prophet Muḥammad are usually seen as a major and decisive break in the history of the area. Nowhere is this more evident than in the history of the elites and elite culture. A new Arab-Muslim elite apparently takes over from the old Greek-speaking Christian leaders of local society and there are few, if any signs of continuity or connection between the two. This seems to be much less true of the Iranian world, where important elements of the pre-Islamic aristocracy, and of its culture, are incorporated in the new order.

Whereas in Iran, we can see a considerable amount of continuity in elites and elite cultures between the late Sasanian and early Islamic worlds, the position in Syria and Palestine is much more obscure. In part, this is a reflection of the divisions within the modern academy: late antiquity ends and few of the specialists in late antiquity venture into the examination of the early Islamic world while on the other hand, many Islamic historians have regarded the pre-Islamic history of the area as either irrelevant or impenetrable. This division is perhaps symbolised by the Cambridge histories. It will be remembered that the Cambridge Ancient History proceeds in 14 stately volumes from c. 9000 BC up to the death of the Emperor Maurice in 602. Thereafter, the Cambridge History of Islam ushers in a new set of issues and a new gallery of characters who appear to have little or any relationship with the inhabitants of volume XIV of the Ancient History. This break is typical of most academic writing in this field, giving the clear, if perhaps unintended, impression that there is a clear and complete break between the two societies.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the question of continuity and change between pre-Islamic and early Islamic Syria and, more specifically, between the social political and social elites of these two cultures. The discussion of the continuity of elites must discuss two separate but related issues. The first is what might be described as biological community, whether the elites of the new era are descendants of the elites of the old or members of the same kinship groups. The second form of continuity is the existence of a continuing elite culture which is adopted by new elites whether they have any biological connection with the old elites or not. Both these levels will be considered in this paper.

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[1] The area discussed in this paper includes the whole of Bilād al-Shām or greater Syria that is the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel/Palestine and the province of Antioch.

It is not easy to make any firm generalisations about the nature of the Byzantine elite of late antique Syria. There is no evidence like that of the Egyptian papyri, showing us the estates and power structures of families like the Apions. The attempt to reconstruct the elite must depend on much more fragmentary evidence, occasional names here and there, and archaeological material, frequently difficult to interpret.

The secular elites of late Byzantine Syria can be divided broadly divided into groups. At the top were the imperial officials in charge of government, the military and administering the imperial estates, Greek speaking and largely Chalcedonian in faith. This group are normally referred to as *rūm* in the Arabic sources and for the sake of brevity, this is the term I shall use in this essay. In contrast to them there were the chiefs of the Bedouin tribes affiliated to the Byzantine empire, the so-called *must'aribat al-shām*[2] led by the phylarchs of the Ghassanid family and largely Monophysite in religion.

The basis of the power of the first of these elites was a mixture of landownership on one hand and control of government office on the other. The evidence for the existence of a landowning class in 6th- and early-7th-century Syria is indirect and partial. Recently Sarris has made a case for the existence of a powerful landowning aristocracy in these areas in late Antiquity.[3] On the basis of the evidence for the existence of latifundia in late antiquity in those regions, Sarris argues that "If we take the epigraphic data for northern Syria as a whole…a wealthy stratum of great landowners is clearly discernable"[4] and there are some traces of great estates in the rich archaeological record of the area.

This may well be true, but the number of individuals in this class whose names we know or whose careers we can follow is very small. There are no families of local dynasties whose trajectories we can trace from one generation to another. The Syro-Byzantine aristocrat of whom we know most is one Magnos the Syrian, favourite of the Emperors Justin II and Tiberius II.[5] According to John of Ephesus[6] he originated from Ḥuwwarin in the central Syrian steppe, where he built a church and surrounded the settlement with a wall. He appears as mentioned by the poet Corippus in 566 as

[2] For this term see al-Balādhurī, 135. The usage raises some problems. The primary meaning of the word is someone who though not an Arab seeks to join the Arabs and become one of them. In this sense it is the origin of the Spanish term Mozarab. This is clearly not the meaning here. Among the alternative meanings given in the classical Arabic lexicography is that of a "dweller in the desert" and this makes most sense in this context. The *must'ariba* were in fact those Arabs who lived in the desert, as distinct, presumably, from those who were living in villages or towns.

[3] Sarris 2006: 115–30. See also the overview of land ownership in 6th-century Byzantium in Morrisson and Sodini 2002: 181–4; Banaji 2002 and the extensive review by Kehoe 2003. For a critique and reappraisal of the evidence, Chavarria and Lewitt 2004; Sarris 2004. For the agricultural economy of Levant in late antiquity see Decker 2001; Kingsley 2001. Both authors present an optimistic picture of a thriving agriculture with surpluses being exported throughout the Eastern Mediterranean.

[4] Sarris 2006: 124.

[5] On his biography, see Feissel 1985. For the estate at Bāb al-Hawā: Tchalenko 1953–58, I: 114–17, pl. xl.

[6] John of Ephesus: 129–30.

comes sacrarum largitionum and in 573 a priest from Apamea wrote to him about a relic of the true cross which he had buried to conceal it from the Persian invaders: the cross was retrieved and taken to Constantinople but the fate of the unfortunate priest is not recorded. It was probably in around 570 that he was appointed curator of the imperial estate of Marina, recorded in an inscription found at Antalya. In the later 6th century, curators of the Imperial estates were among the most power figures in the Byzantine hierarchy.[7] More evidence of his activities comes from the Syrian site of Bāb al-Hawā. Unfortunately the site lies exactly on the modern border between Syria and Turkey. Not only does this mean that investigation and photography are virtually impossible but much of the surviving fabric has been removed to construct the frontier post and the road. Nonetheless, the combination of epigraphic and architectural remains allows us to say something about the design and function of the building. The structures consist of an arch across the old road (the "Bāb" of the Arab name), a church on one side of the road and a large rectangular building on the other. The complex lies at the end of a small valley, about 2km by 400m providing fertile land for the growing of cereals.

Tchalenko dated the church, on stylistic grounds, to the 4th century but the most interesting piece of evidence is an inscription on a stele found about 200 metres to the west of the site. This reads as follows, "Land (*khorion)* belonging to the holy house (*oikos*) of the property of Hormisdas, administered by Magnos, the most illustrious consul, Count of the Sacred Domestics, *kourator* general".[8] The estate seems to have been part of the lands which were granted to Hormisdas, the brother of the Sasanian king Shapur II, when he defected to the Romans in 323. It is not clear whether the estates still belonged to the descendants of Hormisdas or whether, more probably, they had been incorporated into the imperial fisc. The ruins of Bāb al-Hawā are not well enough preserved for us to be able to talk with confidence of an elite residence: what we do have is a centre of estate management whose administrator was careful to make sure that anyone approaching from Antioch would know who owned and ran it. In 581 Magnos, described by a later Syriac source as "a wicked and very bad man"[9] was entrusted by the emperor with the arrest of the Ghassanid Phylarch al-Mundhir, who, according to John of Ephesus,[10] he lured into a trap, inviting him to the consecration of a church he had constructed at Ḥuwwārīn and arresting him. He died, probably in 582, before he was able to capture al-Mundhir's son al-Nuʿmān.

Magnos owed his power to imperial favour and no doubt derived much of his wealth and status from his position as curator of the Imperial estates. However, he also possessed what would seem to have been his own property at Ḥuwwārīn, where he spent money developing the small town. His career may put into context the construction of such semi-palatial buildings as Andarin and Qaṣr ibn Wardān in the same area. We know of other men during this period who bore the titled of Khuratos of the domains of Hormisdas, Domniziolus, who was Magnos' immediate predecessor and was sent by the

7 Feissel 1985: 465.

8 *IGLS* 528 with the commentary by Grégoire 1923.

9 Michael the Syrian, II, 249.

10 John of Ephesus: 132.

Emperor Tiberius in 578–79 to pacify a mutinous army in Armenia, and Constantine Lardys, who was put to death by the Emperor Phocas in 602.[11]

Another landowner we find developing his estates was one Gregorius Abimenus whose activities are recorded in two inscriptions from around the year 600. In one he mentions the foundation of an aqueduct to bring water to his property at Ammatha. In another, dated 604–605 it is recorded that he spent his own money improving the defences of the little town of Anasartha on the desert margins of Northern Syria, presumably because the imperial authorities were unable or unwilling to do so.[12]

Another example of late antique Syrian aristocrats who combined landownership with the exercise of government authority can be found in the story of the misfortunes of the family of Sergius son of Iwannis Rusafoyo from Edessa.[13] Sergius was one of the sources for the Chronicle of Dionysius of Tell-Mahre whose family had inherited the Rusafoyo properties.[14] The story begins when Khusraw II was fleeing into exile in the Byzantine Empire at the beginning of his reign in 590. The fugitive monarch stayed in Edessa at the palace of one Marinus which was next door to the palace owned by Sergius' father Iwannis. "Both Iwannis and Marinus had a certain status in the civil hierarchy of the Roman Empire, but Marinus had always been jealous of Iwannis, not only because of the high esteem in which the emperor held him but also because his estates were more lucrative than those of Marinus." Khusraw was impressed by the beautiful buildings of Iwannis' palace and had himself invited to dinner. Iwannis put on a great party with "the complete service of gold and silver implements, tables, plates, serving-dishes, spoons, dessert-dishes, drinking-goblets, wine-jars, pitchers, flagons, basins and vessels of every kind, all of gold and silver". As so often in stories of rich men who entertained kings, things turned out badly. Iwannis' wife inadvertently insulted Khusraw and when the monarch returned to Edessa in 604, this time as a conqueror, he had her and her son Sergius deported to Persia (Iwannis was presumably dead by this time). She was forbidden to wash and allowed no new clothes and died in miserable captivity. Her son was pardoned in memory of his father's hospitality and allowed to return to his estates but when he returned he found that all his moveable property had disappeared so that "nothing was left except villages, orchards, mills and shops". In fact his mother had buried all the gold and silver but had neglected to tell anyone where it was and its whereabouts were still unknown when Dionysius was writing in the mid-9th century.

This story is interesting for all sorts of reasons not least because the family connection with the chronicler Dionysius explains why the story of this family, and this family alone, has come down to posterity. It also, for example, provides one of the rare textual accounts of the deposition of a hoard of precious objects, a process well-attested in the archaeological record. It also makes important points about aristocratic power. Marinus and Iwannis owe their status both to their position in the imperial administration and

11 Feissel 1985: 472–3.

12 Sarris 2006: 125–6.

13 See the "reconstitution" of Dionysius of Tell-Mahre's chronicle in Palmer 1993: 122–4. I am grateful to Simon Ford for drawing my attention to this.

14 Palmer 1993: 98–100.

their ownership of estates in the countryside but they live in their town palaces and it is here that they display their wealth. Finally it is interesting to note that the ownership of these estates does not seem to have been affected by either the Persian or the Arab conquests as they were passed down by inheritance within the same group of Edessan families at least until the 9th century.

A final example of quasi-governmental powers of local landowners dates from the early part of the 7th century from a short passage in al-Balādhurī's *Futūh al-buldān* in which he discusses the history of the city of Bālis. Bālis and the neighbouring settlement of Qāsirīn belonged to two brothers from the Greek aristocracy (*min ashrāf al-Rūm*). They had been assigned the villages (*uqṭiʿā al-qurā)* and made protectors *(ḥāfidhīn)* of the cities in between.[15] The vocabulary here is problematic. Though often translated as "fief", the root "*qṭʿ*" means to have land in absolute ownership and *ḥāfidhīn* is not a word normally used in this context in classical Arabic. This short account implies a situation where a number of small towns and estates in this crucial strategic area were owned by magnates who were also responsible in some way for their defence.

The existence of this powerful group of magnates may provide the context for two of the most remarkable secular buildings of late antique Syria, Androna and Qaṣr Ibn Wardan. The first of these is the *kastron* at Androna (al-Andarīn) a finely built quasi-military structure with a bath house outside the walls, which became the nucleus of a small urban settlement which continues to thrive into Umayyad times. We know from an inscription found on the site that this was constructed by one "munificent Thomas" in 558. Frustratingly, we know nothing more about who this Thomas might have been or why he was building this high status building in such a remote outpost but the most likely explanation is that he was, like Magnos, a member of this landowning elite and it must be remembered that Magnos' home base at Ḥuwwārīn is close to Androna and situated in a similar semi-arid environment.

Even more enigmatic is the nearby site of Qaṣr Ibn Wardān.[16] Here we find an impressive palace and church, both preserved to an astonishing degree and a ruined building nearby which has been described as a barracks. The architecture, fired brick with stone surrounds, is of a very high quality. We have building inscriptions of 564 and 572 and another which reads *ton Georgion*. It has been plausibly suggested[17] that this magnificent structure was built for George who is known from a surviving seal to have been a *stratelates*, that is an army officer only one grade below the *Magister Militum per Orientem.* Androna and Qaṣr Ibn Wardān seem to stand alone now as examples of high status rural building in late antique Syria but they may be the only surviving examples of a class of buildings which have largely disappeared. Survey work around Androna has shown that there was a well developed irrigation system and it is likely that cultivation was fairly widespread in these potentially fertile lands and this in turn might suggest a proprietor willing to invest in large-scale canal and fouggara systems. The hinterland of

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[15] Al-Balādhurī: 150.

[16] On Androna: Strube 2003, and Mundell Mango 2008. On Qaṣr Ibn Wardān, De' Maffei 1995.

[17] De' Maffei 1995: 111.

Qaṣr Ibn Wardān has never been systematically surveyed so we have no means of telling whether the complex stood at the heart of an agricultural estate or in splendid isolation on the fringes of the desert.

There is little or no evidence in the archaeological record from the more fertile agricultural areas of late antique Syria and Palestine for the sort of villa civilisation typical of Italy and much of the late Roman West in the 4th and 5th centuries, that it to say, of the large, elite dwellings surrounded by their own estates and estate buildings.[18] However, archaeological and epigraphic evidence from Palestine does suggest that there were large agricultural estates in the province.[19] The Saltus Constantiniacus and the Saltus Gerariticus both lay on the arid margins of Limes Palestiniae. To these can be added the estate of Sycomazon to the south of Gaza. They were administered by procuratores and actors of the *res privata* who collected rents from tenant farmers. Settlement in this area needed careful water management and the remains of large cisterns and water channels have been found. The Saltus Gerariticus appears on the Madaba map and it and the Saltus Constantiniacus are recorded in the lists of George of Cyprus. A richly dressed and bejewelled donor portrait of "Calliora, Lady of Saltus" has been discovered in a church of St Elias of Kissufim, dated to 576–78. The estates clearly retained their identity, or at least the memory of their identity down to the time of the Muslim conquests and it may be that in the person of Calliora we have that most elusive of creatures, the great landed proprietor (or in this case, proprietrix), of the end of the 6th century.[20] Also in Palestine, Procopius records that the orator Evangelus from Caesarea bought the coastal village of Porphyreon for the vast price of three centenaria of gold only to have it confiscated by Justinian,[21] another indication that large scale landownership may have been a more widespread phenomenon that the scanty evidence might lead us to suggest.

On the other hand, the extensive survey of rural settlement in Palestine in the Byzantine period published by Hirschfeld[22] has yielded little firm evidence of elite dwellings in the countryside. There are certainly some more elaborate farm houses, sometimes with baths and fortified towers but the overall proportions were modest and the architecture unpretentious. At the so-called "Third Mile Estate" near Askelon we find clear evidence of an industrial estate designed as a self-sufficient unit which exported oil and wine in jars made in kilns of the estate. There was a bath house and fish-ponds and the proprietors or managers seem to have lived above the store where the wine jars were kept.[23] At Ramat Hanadiv near Caesarea there is a substantial farm of the Byzantine period with a wine press and storage facilities and simple but substantial dwelling wing.[24] Again, these examples may point to the existence in Palestine of "landowning provincial

18 See Applebaum 1989. See also the attempt to find élite dwellings in the rural areas in D.F. Graf 2001: 227–30.

19 Dauphin 1998: 72–3, 104–5.

20 The mosaics are reproduced with a slightly different interpretation in Cohen 1993.

21 Procopius, *Anecdota* XXX. 18–19.

22 Hirschfeld 1997.

23 Hirschfeld 1997: 46, 69–70 and figsures 23–4.

24 Hirschfeld and Birger-Calderon 1991.

upper classes"[25] but the buildings on these estates were modest and practical with few architectural pretensions.

Further light has recently been thrown on the elite of pre-Islamic Syria by the Petra papyri. Since the discovery and partial publication of the papyri from the burnt church, Petra has become one of the better known cities of the 6th century.[26] City life seems to have been dominated by "middle class if not upper class possessors".[27] Certainly until the last decade of the 6th century (the latest papyrus is dated to 591) the local landowners controlled the city, monopolised most of the government offices and probably provided the clergy. They were not, however, major regional powers. The properties of the three brothers Bassus, Epiphanios and Sabinus detailed in one of the documents consisted of small, scattered plots amounting to perhaps 135 acres in all.[28] It seems that they were prosperous and probably influential, but more gentry than great landowners.

It is not clear how much of this secular aristocracy survived the Persian occupation of Syria between 610 and 628 with their wealth and reputation intact. Many must have been killed, dispossessed or emigrated. However the survival of the Rusafoyo family of Edessa despite their difficulties, and the presence of the Greek speaking elite families which produced Sophronius and St John of Damascus suggests that some of them at least did manage to maintain their positions.

The story of the survival of the family of St John of Damascus is perhaps especially revealing in this regard.[29] His grandfather Manṣūr b. Sarjūn (Sergios) had been appointed by the Emperor Maurice to supervise the collection of taxes but had failed, not surprisingly, to send anything to the fisc during the Persian occupation. He tried to excuse himself on the grounds that he had sent the money to the Persians but Heraclius had insisted on fining him 100,000 aurei. It may be because of his resentment over this that he negotiated the surrender of the city to the Muslims and took service under the new regime under which the family continued to run the fiscal administration.

The Greek brothers who owned Balis and the surrounding villages may have been another family whose power and influence survived the Persian occupation and the subsequent Byzantine reoccupation. They may have lived there throughout or they may have been carpetbaggers returning with Heraclius and the Byzantine armies in 628 but they were nonetheless a Greek elite family owning estates and performing quasi-government functions on the eve of the Muslim conquest. Such evidence as there is, then, suggests that this elite were still infuential in the very last years of Byzantine Syria.

The other important group in the elite of late antique Syria were the leaders of the Arab *mustʿariba* tribes allied to the Roman government and led, at least until 581, by the Jafnid branch of the Ghassān tribe. The Byzantines had any allies among the mostly Christian Arab tribes of the Syrian desert who gave them military assistance. One sources mentions the Christian Arabs (*naṣārī al-ʿarab*) who provided supplies for the

25 Cameron 1985: 5–8.

26 For an introduction to the papyri, Koenen 1996.

27 Fiema 2002.

28 Koenen 1996: 183–4.

29 For the history of the family see Auzépy 1994: 193–204.

Byzantine army before the battle of Ajnādayn.[30] Later the same author describes the Byzantine army at the battle of Yarmūk as being formed of, among others, Armenians, the people of al-Jazīra and "all those who were of their (scil. the Byzantines) religion from the *mustʿariba*".[31]

At the time of the first Muslim attacks on Syria the most important Arab tribes in the steppe land and the desert were Balī in the Balqa region south of Amman, Judhām and Lakhm, again in the Balqa and further south in Transjordan and Palestine, Bal-Qayn, to the east of Judhām and further out in the desert, Banū al-Kalb in the Palmyrena and the Ghassān in the Ḥawrān and the area around Damascus.[32] Further north in the area around Homs and Aleppo lived the semi-settled Tanūkh while the Bahrā' lived in the middle Euphrates area to the east.

The clearest indication of the composition of the *mustʿariba* as a group comes in the context of the Muslim expedition to Mu'ta in September 629.[33] The Arab sources[34] say that the Muslims were confronted, and were defeated, by a Byzantine (*Rūm)* army of 100,000 sent by Heraclius and the *mustʿariba* of the tribes of Lakhm, Judhām, Bāl-Qayn, Bahrā' and Balī, also said to have numbered 100,000, commanded by one Mālik b. Rāfila[35] of the Banū Irāsha of Balī. The numbers are clearly enormously exaggerated but the identity of the group is clear and it is surely significant that the commander of the whole Byzantine force was one was one of the *mustʿariba*, not one of the *rūm*.

The leaders of these tribes can certainly be counted among the elite of late antique Syria. Until 581 the *mustʿariba* tribes were led by the Jafnid family, who were given the title of phylarchs. The Jafnids came from the tribe of Ghassān and are frequently referred to as the "Ghassanids" but this is lightly misleading because, we shall see, the Ghassān had independent leaders and survived as a group after the disappearance of the Jafnids. The nature of Jafnid leadership has been much disputed. Fundamentally the dispute lies between Irfan Shahid, who argues that the "Ghassanids" were leaders of a powerful and developed Arab Christian state and Whittow who sees them essentially as managers of a tribal coalition among whom they distributed subsidies from the Imperial government.[36] The Arab sources speak of a number of castle-palaces built by the Ghassanids but there is little indication that landownership was an important part of their income. We do have an inscription found in a large and elegant house on the edge of the Ḥawrān and dated to 581 which was built by the *epitropos* of the Ghassanids, Flavios Seos.[37] This was clearly an administrative official but it is not clear what he was administrating: was it agricultural estates and their revenues or was he simply collecting the *khuwa* payments which settled peoples paid to their Bedouin neighbours?

30 Ibn Aʿtham: I, 134.
31 Ibn Aʿtham: I, 231.
32 For the distribution of Arab tribes in Syria, Donner 1981: 102–11.
33 For the date, Donner 1981: 101.
34 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 1610–18.
35 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 1611, 1617.
36 For the discussion see Whittow 1999.
37 See Waddington 1870: nn. 2110, 2111.

We know little about relations between the Hellenised landowning aristocracy and the *mustʿariba* but there is some evidence of rivalries between the two groups, competing for power in the area and perhaps too, for imperial subsidies. It is not clear for a start how many of them survived the Persian invasion and occupation with their positions and resources intact. Many must have been killed, dispossessed or emigrated. However the survival of the family of Edessa, despite their difficulties, and the presence of the Greek-speaking elite families which produced Sophronius and St John of Damascus suggests that some of them at least did manage to maintain their positions.

As noted already, the Greek brothers who owned Balis and the surrounding villages may have been another family whose power and influence survived the Persian occupation and the subsequent Byzantine reoccupation. Whether they lived there throughout or returned with Heraclius and the Byzantine armies in 638 is unknown, but they were nonetheless a Greek elite family owning estates and performing quasi-government functions on the eve of the Muslim conquest. It will be remembered that it was Magnos, the best known member of the landowning elite, who was responsible for the arrest of al-Mundhir the Ghassanid, the leader of the group who were later known as the *mustʿariba*. Are we seeing here a rivalry for power and influence between a landowning, Greek speaking Chalcedonian elite on one side and a bedouin, Arabic speaking Monophysite party on the other? It is most unlikely that things were so simple, but the fault lines in the Syrian elite may form an important part of the background to the Arab Muslim takeover of the country. It is possible to argue that the Islamic conquest of Syria amounted, at least in part, to a resettling of power and influence between two groups in the local Syrian elite, the Hellenised landowners and the *mustʿariba* tribes.

Syrian Elites in Early Islam

The fate of the Imperial-landowning elite of Syria after the Muslim conquests raises all sorts of problems. Some at least of this elite emigrated to Byzantine territory or further west to North Africa and Italy in the aftermath of the Arab conquests.[38] The Arabic sources provide a certain amount of detail about this movement of peoples. As might be expected, most of the emigration seems to have been from the towns of the Mediterranean littoral. When Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān conquered the coastal cities of what is now Lebanon, he "expelled many of the people" though it is not clear whether they fled to Byzantine territory.[39] In some cases, whole cities seem to have been abandoned by their Greek[40] inhabitants. One such place was Tripoli (Lebanon). Here the Greek inhabitants were besieged by the Muslim commander Sufyān b. Mujīb al-Azdī and his

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38 On this emigration, Lilie 1976: 231–4.

39 Al-Balādhurī: 126.

40 One of the interesting features of the Arabic narrative is the use of the word *Rūm*. These are clearly distinguished from the rest of the population. It is clear that they must have been Greek speaking and that they were Christian. After that, things are less clear. Were all Greek-speaking Christians classified as *Rūm* or was it only used for members of the Byzantine official classes,

men. They met in one of the three fortifications which gave the city its name and agreed to write to the "King of the Greeks" asking him to send ships to evacuate them. One night they all embarked and left and when Sufyān woke up the next morning, he found that the fortifications were deserted. At Jabala, on the coast north of Tripoli the Greek inhabitants deserted the fortifications when they heard about the Muslim conquest of Homs. There were also migrations from further inland: at Balis on the Euphrates bend where, "most of the inhabitants left for the Byzantine Empire or the Jazīra", then still in Byzantine hands.[41]

The largest evacuation of the Greek inhabitants seems to have been from Cilicia. Here it was not initiated by the inhabitants trying to escape from the Muslim attackers but was the result of the conscious policy of the Emperor Heraclius who ordered the inhabitants of the area to leave and that the fortifications should be destroyed to form a sort of no-man's land where the Muslims would be unable to find supplies.[42] Many of the people of Cilicia do indeed seem to have left but not everyone in the border regions was prepared to abandon their homes and livelihoods for the privilege of living in Christian ruled territory. According to one report, Heraclius attempted to persuade the people of Edessa to leave with him but they refused, saying that they were better off staying where they were.[43]

Some of the treaties between the inhabitants of the cities and the Muslims made specific provision for any Byzantines who wished to leave to do so. In the treaty allegedly made with the people of Jerusalem, for example, there was a clause which said, "As for those who want to leave the city, their lives and possessions will be secure until they reach their place of safety. Those of the people of Jerusalem who want to leave with the Byzantines (*Rūm*), take their possessions and abandon their churches and crosses will be secure until they reach their place of safety".[44] At Baalbek the Greeks were not allowed to enter the town but would be able to leave and go wherever they wished.[45] In the treaty of Miṣr, which stipulated the terms under which Egypt was to be surrendered to the Muslims, a clause said that "those Byzantines (*Rūm*) and Nubians who were willing to accept the same terms as the covenant with the people of Miṣr (i.e. the Copts), will have the same privileges and duties as the latter". The next clause adds that,"He who does not wish to accept these terms and chooses to depart will be secure until he reaches his destination where he can be safe, or has moved out of the territory under our authority."[46] We cannot be sure of the authenticity of the exact wording of these treaties but they probably do preserve the general outlines of the settlements and do show that it was recognised that at least some of the Byzantine ruling elite would wish to leave. Not all

whether military or civilian? Or was it a self-defining group in the sense that those who wanted to emigrate were called *Rūm*?

41 Al-Balādhurī: 150.

42 Al-Balādhurī: 163–4; Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2396.

43 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2395.

44 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2405–6.

45 Al-Balādhurī: 130.

46 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2588–9.

communities were given the option. In the case of Caesarea which put up the strongest resistance of all the coastal cities and was in the end taken by force rather than by treaty, the people were kept as hostages in case the Byzantines maltreated Muslim prisoners.[47] In the end many of them were sent to the Hijāz to work as clerks and labourers for the new Muslim elite in Madīna but there is no mention of any being allowed to emigrate to Byzantine lands.

The impression of a widespread exodus, especially from the cities of the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, is reinforced by the measures that Muʿāwiya, as governor of Syria, is said to have taken to repopulate the area. Of course the depopulation of these areas was not caused solely by the Byzantines fleeing from the Muslim conquerors: plague, earthquakes and the Persian invasions must all have played their part. The new inhabitants were not all Arab Muslims. In Tripoli the fortification abandoned by the Greeks was filled with Jews. In the year 42, Muʿāwiya moved Persians from Baalbak, Ḥimṣ and Antioch to settle Tyre, Acre and other cities in the area. He even transported Asāwira (Persian elite troops who had joined the Muslim armies during the conquest of Iraq) from Kūfa and Baṣra in Iraq to the area. Nor was this just a short term measure. We know of one of these Persians, one Muslim b. ʿAbd Allah who was the ancestor of a long established family in Antioch.[48] Many of the new inhabitants were given *qaṭāʾiʿ* or property grants to enable and encourage them to settle. It was said that all the tithe lands (that is lands which only paid the *ʿushr* or tenth as land tax rather than the more burdensome *kharāj*) in Syria, from which the *qaṭāʾiʿ*¸ were granted, were lands which had been abandoned by the inhabitants.[49]

Many of the emigrants must have gone to Byzantine territory[50] but some at least seem to have travelled more widely. Evidence for the Syrian diaspora of the late 7th and 8th centuries can be found in Rome itself where no less that five of the popes who reigned between 642 and 741 were of Syrian origin.[51] Theodore (642–49) is described as "natione Grecus ex patre Theodoro episcopo de civitate Hierusolima".[52] As Duchesne notes, it is not clear from the text whether it was he or his father who came from Jerusalem and there is no record of a bishop called Theodore from the Holy City at this time but the origin of the family is clear. John V (685–86) was "natione Syrus de provintia Anthiochia",[53] Sergius (687–701) was "natione Syrus Antiochia regionis, ortus ex patre Tiberio in Panormo Siciliae" (i.e. of Syrian origin but born in Palermo in Sicily).[54] Finally, both Constantine (708–15) and Gregory VIII (731–41) are described as "natione Syrus".[55] In no cases do we know exactly when or why they or their families left Syria. From the

47 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2398.

48 Al-Balādhurī: 117.

49 Al-Balādhurī: 150.

50 On these see Haldon 2007.

51 For the lives of the Popes Duchesne 1955.

52 Duchesne 1955: 331.

53 Duchesne 1955: 366.

54 Duchesne 1955: 371.

55 Duchesne 1955: 389, 415.

names of their fathers (Theodore, Cyriacus, Tiberius, John and John) it seems as if they all came, as one would imagine, from Greek-speaking backgrounds.

Another example of the diaspora was Theodore of Tarsus (602–90), who in 669 became Archbishop of Canterbury in England.[56] He was born, as his name suggests, in Tarsus in Cilicia and was almost certainly among those who left the area when Heraclius depopulated it and devastated it before retreating to Constantinople. Theodore was known to have visited Constantinople but by the 640s he was a monk in Rome. It is likely that, along with other Syrian Christians, his fierce opposition to the monothelite doctrine, which the Emperor Heraclius had made official policy, meant that Rome was a much more congenial environment than the imperial capital. We do not know quite why Pope Vitalian appointed him to the see at Canterbury but it was an outstanding choice, Theodore bringing a wealth of knowledge of Greek theology and exegesis to England.

Another piece of evidence for the exodus from Syria comes from the history of the "Greek" monasteries established in Rome in the 7th and early 8th centuries.[57] In some cases, at least, the monks in them came from Syria. The earliest evidence of the presence of monks from the Near East comes in accounts of the Lateran Council of 649. There were apparently, two such houses. One was called Renati and was somewhere on the Esquiline Hill. It is described as a monastery of the Armenians but these were clearly Greek-speaking, Chalcedonian Armenians. The other, probably founded shortly after 649, was known as the monastery of the Cilicians, situated outside the city walls close to the basilica of St Paul. The Cilician monks had come from Palestine to North Africa but the Arab raids had made that area unsafe as well and they then crossed to Italy. This house seems to be connected with the spread of the cult of St Anastasius the Persian. Anastasius was martyred by the Sasanians, probably in around 628. After the Byzantine reconquest of Palestine in the same year, his head, and the story of his life were taken to Jerusalem and then, via Cilicia, to Constantinople. Within a couple of decades of his death, the reputation of the saint had spread as far as Britain. The Armenians may well have been fleeing the Sasanian conquest of their country in around 610[58] and the monks of St Sabas were taking refuge from the Muslims. Both communities preferred Rome to Constantinople, because of their opposition to Monothelitism.

The western evidence does suggest that some churchmen, especially from Cilicia, did leave Syria and settle in the west, bring with them a clear "Greek" identity. Clearly the "Syrians" were powerful enough to secure the papacy on a number of occasions. How far these emigrations were the result of the Arab conquests is not clear. Many, like Maximus Confessor first left Syria to escape from the Persian conquests. Yet others were wanting to escape from objectionable state-enforced Byzantine religious orthodoxies, Monothelitism until 680 and Iconoclasm shortly after that, and these may have been at least as important motivators as the problems caused by Muslim rule.

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56 See Lapidge 2004.

57 See Sansterre 1980; Ekonomou 2007. See also Flusin 1992: II, 365–74.

58 For these events see Flusin 1992: II, 70–83.

It is clear that the Emperor left Syria and that the remnants of the Byzantine army which had failed to defeat the Arab Muslims were withdrawn behind the Taurus range and settled in Anatolia. It is not clear, however, how much further the exodus went. We can probably assume that many of the most senior functionaries of the Byzantine Empire, and those most ideologically committed to Byzantine rule did depart but that many more, including such senior figures as Sarjūn b. Manṣūr chose to remain. There is an obvious contrast here with the elite of the Sasanian Empire who had nowhere else to go and had to make their peace with the new regime or die.

It is difficult to believe that the entire *Rūm* either emigrated or were killed. Many may have sunk into poverty and obscurity. There is a possibility that some at least entered the ranks of the Umayyad *mawālī* and in doing so preserved something of their elite status in a new guise. The term *mawlā* (plural *mawālī)* is used in many different senses in the early Arabic sources. The original meaning was that of client or non-Arab attached to a member of an Arab tribe. In the early days after the Islamic conquests, acquiring the status of *mawlā* to an Arab tribe was the mechanism whereby a non-Arab non-Muslim could convert to Islam. As a result of the increasing numbers becoming *mawālī* the term comes to be used to describe the mass of the non-Arab Muslims mostly men of modest social status seeking to enjoy the benefits of conversion.

Among the mass of the *mawālī*, however, there was one group who stand out as being in a different category. Those were the caliph's *mawālī*, described either as being the *mawlā* of a particular caliph, *mawlā Muʿāwiya* for example or less specifically, *mawlā amīr al-mu'minīn.* These were the chosen confidants of the caliphs, advisers and members of their households. They were often very powerful and devoted to the Umayyad cause. We rarely have indications of the origins or social origins of these individuals and many of them may have been able and loyal persons of modest social status who were hand-picked to serve the rulers. It may also be that becoming the personal *mawlā* of the caliph was a way in which members of the elite of the *Rūm* of Syria could integrate into the new elite of the Umayyad caliphate. Unfortunately there is very little direct evidence of this but once again we are helped by the history of the family of St John of Damascus. Almost uniquely for this time, we have information about them from both Christian sources (admiring and critical), preserved because of St John's importance in the development of Christian theology, and the Arab-Muslim sources, where they are remembered in a more factual way for their administrative role. The key figure here is the saint's father Sarjūn. As already noted he is described as Sarjūn b. Manṣūr al-Rūmī and also as *mawlā Muʿawīya*. That he was a member of the caliph's inner circle cannot be doubted. In a passage detailing what might be described as Muʿāwiya's "cabinet" at the beginning of his reign in 661, Sarjūn was listed second after the *sāḥib al-shurta* and is described as the caliph's *kātib* (secretary) and *ṣāḥib 'amrihi* a term meaning roughly business manager.[59] Interestingly of the five officials named (*ṣāḥib al-shurta, kātib, ṣāḥib al-haras* (guard), *ḥājib* (chamberlain) and *qādī*, only the *ṣāḥib al-shurṭa* and the *qādī* were of Arab origin, all the rest being described as *mawālī.* Sarjūn's importance continued under Muʿāwiya's son Yazīd (680–84) and when the caliph was faced with the most difficult political crisis

[59] Al-Ṭabarī: II, 205.

of his reign, the expedition of al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī from Madīna to Iraq, it was to Sarjūn that he turned for advice.[60]

It would be wrong to extrapolate too far from the history of one family and much more research needs to be done on the Umayyad *mawālī* as a political and social group. There are a number of interesting points here in this story. One is that although described as a *mawlā*, Sarjūn seems to have kept his Christian faith. While this is not said explicitly the fact that his son was clearly a Christian and in all the Christian polemic that surrounds his career there is no accusation that his father had lost his faith, makes this probable. The second point is that it is only the existence of the Christian tradition which means that he knew more than the basic existence of Sarjūn. He would simply be known as Sarjūn al-Rumī, one of the many *mawāli* who served the early Umayyad caliphs.

This makes it possible that there was some continuity between the *Rūm* elite of late Byzantine Syria and the *mawālī* of the Umayyad caliphs. What is striking, however, is the way in which this service elite forgot or deliberately obliterated the memory of their pre-Islamic past. There is a marked contrast here with the dehqans of Iraq and Iran who served the early caliphs. Many of these preserved the memories of their pre-Islamic identities and, perhaps more important, they asserted their status as bearers of pre-Islamic administrative and cultural values of Sasanian Iran. They openly asserted the importance of the practice of Sasanian monarchs like Khusraw Anushirvan as exemplary monarchs. No Rūmī *mawla*, as far as we know, appealed to the memory of Justinian as an example to be followed.

The big winners in the rearrangement of elites which followed the Muslim conquest were, of course, the *mustʿariba*. Yet their triumph was not as easy or complete as might be imagined. Some of them joined the emigrants to Byzantine held territory. The most high profile of them all was Ayham b. Jabala, described as the King of the Ghassān. He had converted to Islam but had been disgusted at being treated as an equal to a low born Muslim and left for the Byzantine empire, taking with him, according to some accounts, 30,000 of his followers.[61] There was a rumour, reported in the Arab Muslim sources, that one of his descendants actually became Emperor of Byzantium with the title of Nikephoros I (802–11). While there is no firm evidence for this it is certainly not impossible. There was nearly a larger defection when the Christian bedouin Banū Taghlib refused to pay the taxes demanded because they were a sign of humiliation and threatened to leave the Muslim lands and settle in Byzantine territory. It was only after some careful diplomacy that the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (634–44) decreed that they need only pay the alms (*sadaqa*) demanded of all believers but at twice the rate paid by Muslims.[62] The Muslim authorities seem to have been prepared to accept that fact that many Byzantines should be allowed to leave, at least if their cities had surrendered peacefully. In the case of Arabs, however, the authorities took a much more severe approach. According to one report, when ʿUmar heard that a Christian Arab tribe in the Jazīra, the Banū Iyād some 4000 strong, had sought refuge in Byzantine territory,

60 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 227, 239.

61 Al-Balādhurī: 136–7.

62 Al-Balādhurī: 182–3; Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2509–11.

he wrote to the Emperor threatening that he would tear up all the agreements he had made with the local Christians and expel them from Muslim territory unless the errant Bedouin were driven back into Muslim held territory. The Emperor, we are told, duly complied.[63] Most of the Arab tribal elite of Syria made their peace with the Muslims, or at least with the governor of Syria, Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān and his family. Men like Ḥassān b. Baḥdal, chief of the Banū Kalb, probably the most numerous and powerful of the Christian Arab tribes of Syria, retained their Christian religion but married their daughters into the Umayyad family and became important political figures in the Umayyad state. We do not know exactly when and how the survivors of those *ʿarab al-rūm* who had been defeated along with their Byzantine allies at the Battle of Yarmūk attached themselves and linked their fortunes to Muʿāwīya but the process must have begun in the immediate aftermath of the conquest.

The emigration of Jabala b. Ayham and his followers to Byzantine territory did not mean the disappearance of Ghassān from the Arab Middle East. Some members of the group at least, did not join the exodus and continued to play an important role in the politics of early Islamic Syria. There were however important differences. The tribe no longer had any unique and special relationship with the authorities. It was one of a number of *mustʿariba* tribes, who formed the bedrock of support for the early Umayyads in Syria. They were firmly attached to the Yamaniya or southern party in Umayyad politics. The leadership also changed. The Jafnids lost their position with the departure of Jabala b. Ayham and were supplanted by a new line who traced their descent to Kaʿb, brother of the original Jafna b. ʿAmr.

The Ghassān were supporters of the Umayyads from a very early stage. We come across them in accounts of the confrontation at Ṣiffīn in 657 between the largely Iraqi supporters of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib and the Syria supporters of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān. The accounts of this confrontation are extremely interesting, detailing as they do the composition of tribal support for both leaders. The Ghassanids, naturally, supported Muʿāwiya. The position was summed up in the battle poem said to have been chanted by a young warrior (*fatā shāb*) of Ghassān when attacking the supporters of ʿAlī:

> I am the son of the great kings (*arbāb al-mulūk*) of Ghassān
> But today I follow the *dīn* of ʿUthmān.
> Terrifying news has reached me
> That ʿAli has killed the son of ʿAffān.[64]

The Ghassān certainly kept a reputation for military prowess and, we are told, the grudging respect of ʿAlī b. Abī Tālib himself:

"ʿAlī passed a group of men with a banner and saw that they stood firm in their position. He urged his men on against them and was told that they belonged to Ghassān. He said, 'They will not give up their position with a hard spear thrust that will drive the breath from them and a sword blow by which heads will be split open, bones will

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[63] Al-Ṭabarī: I, 2508–9.

[64] Al-Ṭabarī: I, 3323.

be scattered and from which wrists and hands will fall; not until their foreheads are split by shafts of iron and their eyebrows are dispersed over their chests and chins". He went on to urge his men to advance slowly on the Ghassanids "their lances pointed at their hearts" and eventually they abandoned their position.[65] The passage is certainly stronger on rhetoric (it is all in rhyming prose) than on historical accuracy but it shows that the reputation of Ghassān as warriors was still something to be reckoned with. Unfortunately, none of our sources give any names for the leaders of the Ghassanids.

It was in the crisis of the Umayyad caliph after the death of the caliph Yazīd I in 684 that the descendants of the *mustʿariba* tribes demonstrated their *aṣabiyya* (group feeling) and political weight during the conflicts which surrounded the adoption of Marwān b. al-Ḥakam as Umayyad caliph and the battle of Marj Rāhiṭ in 64/684. The peaceful but premature death of the Caliph Yazīd b. Muʿawīya left the Umayyad caliphate in crisis. His two sons were deemed by most to be two young for the caliphate and seem to have lacked ambition for high office. The governor of Damascus, Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays al-Fihrī, and a large proportion of the Arab leaders in Syria decided to accept the caliphate of ʿAbd Allāh b. Zubayr, a non-Umayyad, then based in Makka. At one point, even Marwān, the senior member of the Umayyad family, who had been expelled from the Hijāz by Ibn al-Zubayr and had now arrived in Syria, decided to accept the rule of that same Ibn al-Zubayr. All would have been lost and the Umayyad caliphate would have come to an early end but for the determination of a small group of pro-Umayyad leaders and their supporters. ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād, son of Muʿawīya's right hand man in Iraq and the East, Ziyād b. Abī Sufyān, had been driven out of Iraq and had retreated to Syria, determined to preserve the Umayyad succession. But, although he threw his considerable political weight behind the Umayyad cause, he seems to have had very little military backing and he would have been unable to swing the day without the support of the descendants of the *mustʿariba* tribes. The pivotal figure here was Mālik b. Ḥassān b. Baḥdal who was then governor of Palestine and described as *sayyid* (lord) of the people of Palestine.[66] At the same time he was reviled by his enemies as a bedouin (*aʿrābī*).[67] He summoned the leader of Judhām, Rawḥ b. Zinbāʿ, and made him his deputy and ordered him to incorporate Lakhm into Judhām, "so that you will not be short of men".[68] It was not all easy for Rawḥ had to face competition for the leadership of Judhām from one Nātil b. Qays, who, of course, proclaimed his allegiance to Ibn al-Zubayr. In the end, however, the majority of Judhām and the Arabs of Palestine seem to have followed Rawḥ.

The strength of the enthusiasm of the Syrian tribes for the Umayyad cause can be seen in a confrontation which followed in the mosque in Damascus. The Umayyad cause was championed by another Kalbī, Sufyān b. al-Abrad and the chief of Ghassān, Yazīd b. Abī'l-Nims (son of the father of the weasel)[69] who were imprisoned by al-Ḍaḥḥāk for their stand. Meanwhile Ḥassān rallied his forces in a 40-day meeting at the old Ghassanid

65 Al-Ṭabarī: I, 3325–6.

66 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 468.

67 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 472.

68 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 468.

69 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 470–71.

centre at Jābiya in the Golan Heights.[70] In the end the conflict resulted in a bloody battle at Marj Rāhiṭ, north of Damascus when the Umayyad Marwān b. al-Ḥakam and his supporters defeated al-Ḍaḥḥāk and the adherents of Ibn al-Zubayr. Yazīd b. Abī Nims was not present at the battle because he was in hiding in Damascus but he probably did the Umayyads a more valuable service by leading a revolt which brought the capital over the Umayyad side. One version of the story has him attracting the support of the slaves in the city and it may be that the Ghassanid leader had contacts which enabled him to attract widespread support.[71]

In a poem said to have been composed after his triumph, Marwān himself paid tribute to the tribes who had supported his cause;

I made ready Ghassān and Kalb against them (the supporters of Ibn al-Zubayr)
And Saksakīs,[72] men who would triumph
And Tayyī who would insist on the striking of blows,
And the Qayn who would come weighed down with arms
And Tanūkh, a difficult lofty peak.[73]

The Battle of Marj Rāhiṭ was crucial in establishing the political construction of the Umayyad caliphate. For the next generation, the most powerful and influential of all the groups in the western half of the caliphate were these descendants of the *mustʿariba* tribes. They were certainly now the new Syrian elite and, far from being a new aristocracy from Arabia, they were directly connected with the elite of 6th-century Syria.

The narratives and the poems make it clear that these tribes continued to be important supporters of the Umayyad regime but we hear little about them. They reappear in the historical record to play an important role in the tribal conflicts in the last years of the Umayyad caliphate. Shabīb b. Abī Mālik al-Ghassānī was among the leaders of the Yamaniya of Damascus who plotted to kill the caliph al-Walīd II in 734.[74] But others were given government appointments by the same caliph like ʻAbda b. Rabāḥ al-Ghassānī who was al-Walīd II's ʻ*āmil* (financial administrator) in al-Jazīra.[75] Later in the same year, Ghassān were among the Syrian tribes which marched on Damascus to install Yazīd III as caliph.[76]

Other leaders of these tribes were influential in establishing a new Islamic elite in the Muslim west and above all in al-Andalus. The most important figure in this process was the Ghassanid Ḥassān b. al-Nuʿmān, governor of Ifrīqiya from 695 to 704 and in many ways the real founder of Muslim power in the Maghreb. He was appointed after his predecessor had been killed by the Berbers. The caliph ʿAbd al-Malik obviously

70 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 475–6.
71 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 477.
72 Saksak were a branch of Kinda.
73 Al-Ṭabarī: II. 478.
74 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 1778.
75 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 1870.
76 Al-Ṭabarī: II, 1793.

had great faith in his abilities because he was provided, we are told, with an army of 40,000 mostly Syrian troops probably drawn in large part from the ex-*mustʿariba* tribes. When he arrived in the province, he captured the Byzantine capital at Carthage with little difficulty but the Berbers were more of a problem. He was defeated by the Queen Kāhina and he and his surviving troops were forced back to Cyrenaica. It was not until 701 that he was able to re-establish Muslim rule. Known as *shaykh amīn*, the trustworthy old man, he set about establishing a Muslim administration entering the names of his troops in a *dīwān* and arranging for taxes to be collected. By the time he was dismissed in 704, Muslim rule in the area was on a much firmer footing.

Finally the Ghassanids, like many other Syrian tribes from the Yamaniya were well represented among the Arab settlers in al-Andalus. They were important in the south around Granada and Guadix and in the south-east around Murcia. More Ghassanids arrived in the Syrian army led by Balj b. Bishr in 741 and we hear of Rizq b. al-Nuʿmān al-Ghassānī as governor of Algeciras in 760.[77]

The ʿAbbāsid revolution of 750 was disastrous for the power, wealth and status of the Arab tribes of Syria. They were marginalised and effectively deprived of government subsidies. Like Judhām, Lakhm and Balī with whom they were often associated, they seem to have lost their tribal identity. In al-Yaʿqūbī's time (c. 890) Ghassanids lived in the ghuta (oasis) of Damascus and in the area of Gharandal in southern Jordan, both areas of settled agriculture. Irfan Shahid in his article "Ghassan" in the Encyclopaedia of Islam claims that there are still families in Damascus which claim Ghassanid descent.

However, the Abbasid revolution brought some benefits to some of the descendants of the old elites of Byzantine Syria. When the Umayyad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muʿāwiya fled west to escape the murderous wrath of the new rulers, he arrived eventually on the shores of the Maghreb opposite al-Andalus. From this point of comparative safety he sent his *mawlā* Badr with a message for the Umayyad *mawālī* in the country. They pledged their support and sought allies among the descendants of the *mustʿariba* tribes of Syria and Palestine. It was this coalition which enabled ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muʿāwiya to establish his power in al-Andalus and begin three more centuries of Umayyad rule.[78]

Conclusion

The question of continuity and change in the Syrian élite from late antiquity to early Islam is a complex one. It seems as if the *Rūm*, old Hellenised ruling class, lost their status and identity, either by death in battle, emigration or by merging themselves in the new order as *mawālī* of the Umayyads. The descendants of the Arab tribes who had formed the Ghassanid coalition became the real elite of Syria after the Islamic conquest. The memory and reputation of Justinian and other Byzantine emperors may have perished in Syria, but the reputation of the Ghassanids and their *mustʿariba* followers survived in history, legend and poetry for centuries.

77 For these details see Taha 1989: 138, 145, 149, 216.

78 Kennedy, 1996: 30–33.

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